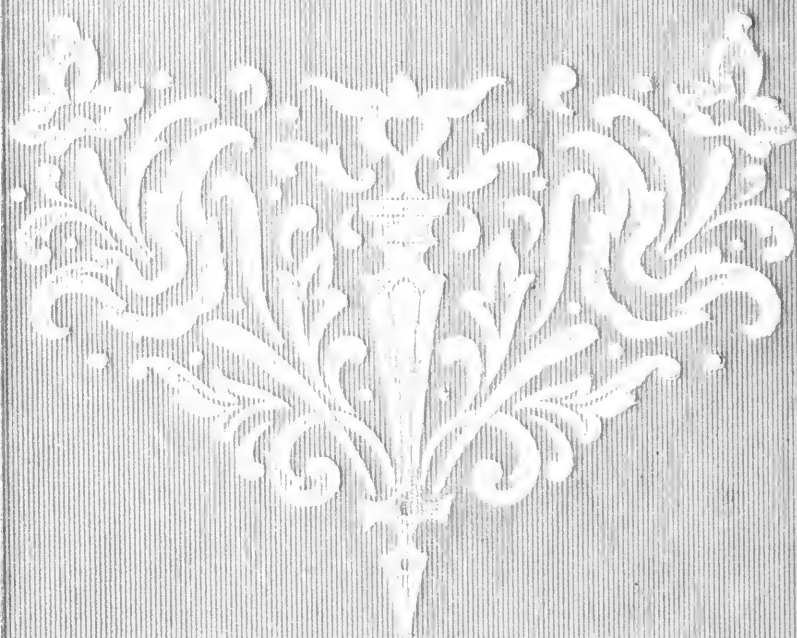


THE BEADS OF TASMER



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THE BEADS OF TASMER

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SHOW OF ORANGE RIBBON," "A BORDER SHEPHERDESS,"
ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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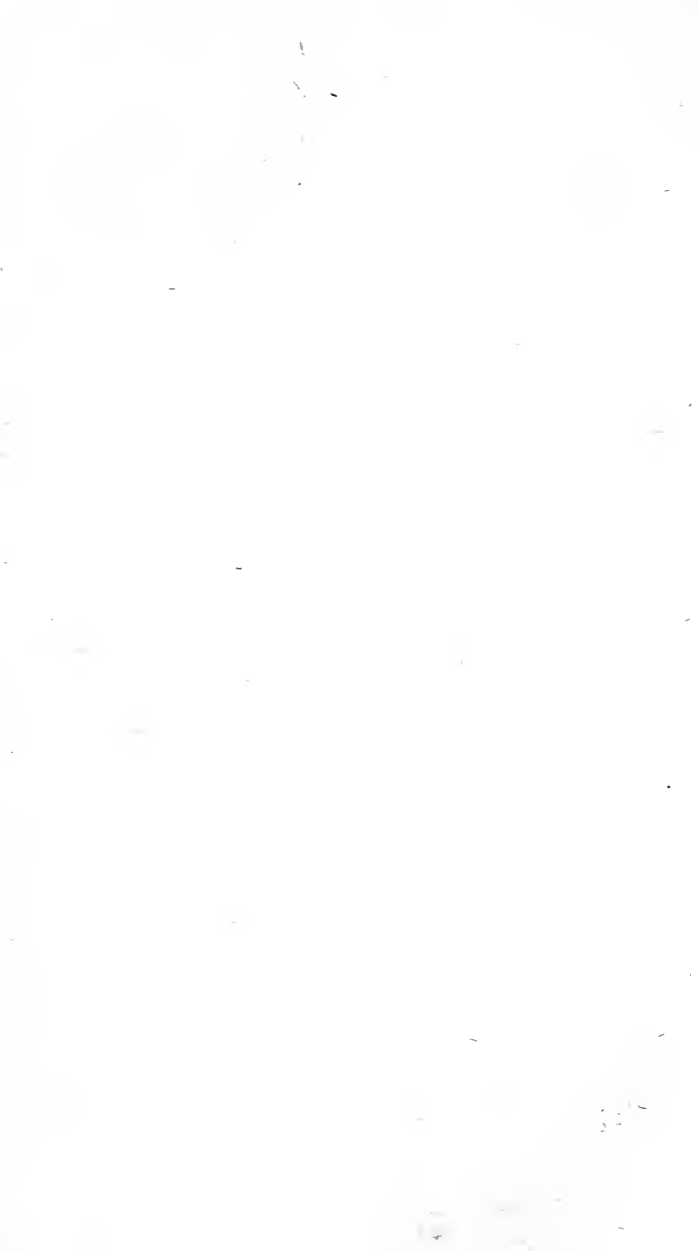
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THE BEADS OF TASMER.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEADS OF TASMER.

“ Lovest thou Mountains great,
Peaks to the clouds that soar,
Corrie and fell where eagles dwell,
And cataracts dash evermore ?

“ Lovest thou green grassy glades,
By the sunshine sweetly kist ;
Murmuring waves, and echoing caves ?
Then go to the Land of Mist.”

On the thundering shores of West Ross stands Tasmer, the old castle of the Torquils. Its foundations are laid upon that colossal masonry which the primeval deep piled up

when it first began the fashioning of the hills ; and there are hours of blinding mist, and dazzling sunshine, when its towers and turrets are scarcely to be distinguished from the great red rocks which buttress the coast against the stormy Minch.

At the foot of these rocks, the waves roar and moan through the vast vaults of innumerable caverns ; surge out again in foaming cataracts, and then roll through the torn and splintered fissures with an appalling fury. But above all this ceaseless battle of earth and water, Tasmer Castle has stood securely for seven centuries. Originally it was little else than a square hall defended by a round tower—the walls of both the hall and the tower being twelve feet thick—but in the sixteenth century, Rolfe Torquil allied himself to the great family of the Mackenzie, and built what is known as “the Lady’s Tower,” for his bride.

Other additions were made at intervals ; and when, at length, the exile of the Stuarts gave a

promise of permanent peace to the Highlands, the Torquils began to take a pride in their old home, and to furnish it luxuriously, according to the Georgian ideas of beauty and splendor. Even the small rooms within the ancient walls were made picturesquely habitable; for the stone work was covered with tapestry, the floors and ceilings with light woods; and dyed skins, gay chintzes, and soft carpets did much to beautify and soften the grim, bare strength which had been the original idea of home. But nothing could banish the strangely *past* look of the older portion of the building. In the brightest summer day, the twilight of Ossian lingers about it; and an imaginative person would scarcely wonder to see some fierce, bare-armed Thane of Ross look from the narrow windows, or walk out from the iron-studded door.

Behind the castle there is a range of mountains, shouldering each other up until their bald heads are lost in mist and clouds. Half way

down, the firs begin; and as they approach Tasmer, the dense woods embrace it on three sides. But to the sea it turns an open face, and looks boldly over "the fractured Caledonian isles;" and the innumerable lochs and bays and sounds through which:

"By night and day,
The great sea-water finds its way
Through long, long windings of the hills."

Among the men of Ross, the Torquils have always held a certain pre-eminence. They have usually had the qualities which insure it; ready tongues, ready hands, and consciences not over-tender. They handled a sword as naturally as a bird uses its wings. They knew their own minds, and worked out their own wills, often ruthlessly, but without weakness or indecision. Also, the Torquils had an immeasurable admiration for the Torquils; that portion of humanity not connected with them, or serviceable to them, had, at best, their profound indifference;

and so little did they care to conceal this social contempt that the motto above their door constantly asserted it—

“ They say,
Wat say they?
Lat them say.”

From such ancestors a family is not easily delivered; and in the beginning of the nineteenth century the Torquils were still known as a race “ Ill to themselves and worse to their foe.” After this, however, the progressive spirit of the time reached even to the lonely Ross shores. Their next baron was sent to a French seminary; he traveled and observed, and learned to partially sacrifice his personal feelings to the rules of cultured society. He was nearly fifty years old when he inherited Tasmer, and had been in active service in various parts of the world for more than twenty years.

So he was not averse to sheathe his sword. The grim old castle, to which he attached the

idea of home, had a very warm place in his heart ; and he cherished a most exalted opinion of the importance of his own position and ancestry. It was a proud moment when his general first addressed him as Sir Rolfe Torquil. Hitherto he had been very reticent about his family, but now, as the head of it, he was quite inclined to be garrulous.

“ It is a very ancient barony,” he said. “ The Torquils are of the pure Albionic race, with some slight admixture of Scandinavian blood. My family were Earls of Ross in the twelfth century.”

This statement was made at mess, where his brother officers were good-naturedly discussing the new prospects of their colonel, and Captain Stafford replied :

“ You may restore the title, Sir Rolfe ; a great deal of favor might be granted you on your military career.”

“ I am one of those who love an old name better than a new one, Captain. And the Tor-

quils have carved 'Torquil' with their swords and bayonets all over the English history of the past century."

"We can go a good deal further back than that," lisped a young lieutenant, with the royal name of Fitz-Roy.

"You ought to do so, sir. You are Norman-English. I am a Highland Chief. We fought for our own side, and were our own masters until a hundred years ago."

"I beg pardon, Sir Rolfe. I did not know about the Torquils."

The young man spoke with an air of apology, but Sir Rolfe answered, with cool contempt:

"That may be; but we think no less of ourselves for *your* not knowing us."

This short conversation indicated the sudden change of manner which his accession to the estate induced. He had always been haughty, but he had hitherto been reticent; and though manner is a great matter, no one finds it easy to complain of a silent man.

Privately, Sir Rolfe's musings were not altogether of unmixed satisfaction. The estate of Tasmer, though of great extent, was unproductive, and the rental roll far below that of the poorest English barony. Highland lords had not then begun to slaughter their game for Covent Garden, nor dreamed of renting out their acres as shooting grounds for their far wealthier southern neighbors. Upon Tasmer's hills were great flocks of sheep, with scrambling feet and twisted horns, and droves of little Highland cattle; and from these sources the largest part of Sir Rolfe's income was derived. Here and there in the narrow straths it was possible to raise cereals, and the wealth of the ocean was at his doors, but within the castle walls there had always been a dreary want of ready money.

No one but himself knew how this want had pinched him for thirty years; and he was by no means sure that his pecuniary perplexities were over. This was the more annoying because his

son and his daughter had arrived at ages when they could no longer be supported at economical schools.

“Donald is twenty-two years old,” he mused ; “he ought to be in the army. Sara is twenty, and is doubtless thinking of fine dresses and lovers and society.”

It was something strange for Sir Rolfe to take the children into consideration at all. He had seen very little of them. When their mother died at a lonely station in the Madras Presidency, they were sent to Scotland ; and they had grown up between the formal discipline of schools and the liberty of the long vacations at Tasmer. During these latter periods, they ruled absolutely the irritable old baron, their grandfather, and lived in a perpetual holiday in each other's company. Only Donald had any memory of his mother ; his sister had forgotten her. But their father had made three long visits to his native land, and during them they had been his companions. Since the last visit, five years had

passed; they had not forgotten him, but they had become accustomed to life without him.

Still, youth always expects change to bring happiness. They looked forward with pleasant anticipations to the new life which his coming home would inaugurate, and they were discussing it together one morning, as they lingered over a late breakfast.

"There will be a great deal to do," said Sara, "when father arrives. Donald, read his letter again. I do not believe I heard a word of it. I was listening to something old Fergus was telling me. What was said about Tasmer?"

"The principal rooms in the castle must be refurnished; for your sake, and for your sister's sake, we must live more like people of wealth and position.' That is what father says."

"And when does he expect to reach home?"

"After this letter—immediately."

"If it were possible for you to meet him on the way, Donald—"

"I think he would not like it, Sara. Father

was always annoyed at anything like 'fuss.' There is no certainty either about the time. He may be delayed in London, for he is sure to go to the Army and Navy Club, and so it is likely he will meet some old comrade. I will take a good horse to Balmacarra, and leave it at the inn for him. I think that is the only attention it will please him to have."

Then they renewed a discussion which was of more personal interest to them.

"I should think father would like to have 'the baron's rooms.' *The Torquil* has always occupied them. What do you think, Donald?"

"I am sure he will keep them, Sara."

"Then there is no reason why you and I should not at once select the apartments we like best. I will have a suite that looks upon the fir forest. O, Donald! What charming hours we have had in those woods! What myteries we have met there! What pretty nests we set rocking as we parted the branches in our way! And how the blackbirds used to sing, just as if

their hearts were not large enough to hold so much happiness! And what blue-bells, and moss, and little daisies! One never forgets such things, Donald."

"No. Yet I always fancied the firs were full of sad stories; that they knew all the dreadful secrets of those days when the Mackenzies and Torquils were burning and slaying, and carrying off miserable women and frightening children. If I sleep at that side of the house I hear them crying all night long. I sleep with my beads in my hands, and wake up in a fright to pray for them. I will have rooms that look over the sea. There is nothing secret about the sea. If any harm was coming the sea way, one could see it coming. What is lurking in a wood, who can tell?"

"Oh, indeed, Donald, you must not say there is nothing secret about the sea," interrupted Sara. "How often it covers itself with a thick mist. Then, how awful and how melancholy are the mountains, and how far away and sad

are the long, low islands! The birds are so quiet, and the very surf is muffled on the beach. Nothing in nature is so full of secrets and of mystery, as the sea."

"But I love the sea, Sara. When I get near it I feel it in every pulse of my body. I would rather watch the wind shimmer across it, than look at the finest picture man ever painted. And as for blue-bells and daisies, how much more I love the sea's pale, salt flowers! Oh, the sea! The sea! Glorious things can be told of the sea, Sara."

"I know that, Donald. I hope father will get you a boat. I could trust myself with you and Angus Mackenzie."

"I should think you could. Now you have given me a sea-longing, Sara. I must go and find Angus."

"Donald, the riding-horse must go to Balma-carra first."

"I had forgotten. The horse is certainly the first thing to be attended to. Still I do not think

father will get here to-day. The stages, after leaving Oban are not to be depended upon."

Indeed, it was nearly a week after this conversation before the new master of Tasmer arrived. The feeling of expectation had expended itself, and the young people were indulging that not unpleasant sentiment of making the best of a happy period which must soon pass away forever. Then, one brilliant July afternoon, when the windows were all open to the fir-woods or the sea, when they were eating dinner, and had for the moment forgotten him, the door quietly opened, and Sir Rolfe Torquil entered.

Donald sat in his grandfather's seat, Sara at his right hand; they were talking merrily, quite occupied with the present, forgetful of the past and the future alike; and of all things, they had the least thought of giving offense—and yet when Sir Rolfe saw Donald in the master's chair, his first feeling—though it was evanescent as a shadow—was one of anger. Innocent as

the appropriation was, and in spite of the joyful love that welcomed him, he felt it.

Yet he looked with delight upon the children who called him "father." Donald had grown far beyond his hopes. His figure was tall and erect. He had blue eyes full of piercing light; eyes that looked straight at everything, like the eyes of an eagle; and that bright auburn hair which had given the prefix *roy*, or red, to so many of his ancestors. It was easy for Sir Rolfe to imagine him at the head of a troop of cavalry rushing by, with the light of battle on his face. And Sara Torquil resembled her brother in her tall, slender form, her dazzling complexion, her bright hair, and frank, fearless manner.

For a little while, the joy of their reunion was almost perfect; but ever, sooner or later, humanity finds the pain of reunion as great as the pain of parting. Some secret disappointment or fear enters into all meetings after long absence. No one has stood still; it is uncertain

whether the changes will please or displease us. Some bonds of sympathy are almost certain to have worn away, and it is to a person, not quite what was expected, that we have to learn to adapt ourselves.

After the night's rest and solitude, something of this feeling was in each heart. Sir Rolfe perceived that his son had become a man; that his daughter had crossed the line—

“Where the brook and river meet.”

She was no longer a school-girl to be retired to a governess or sent out of the parlor if her society interfered with him. And to the children, their father was not quite the same. They missed his uniform; it had always inspired in them pride and respect. They missed also that air of careless relaxation, which was natural in a soldier on furlough, but not desirable in the master of a home to be arranged on a permanent basis. So that Sir Rolfe Torquil was in many respects unlike the man whom they remembered as Colonel Torquil.

His return home and his accession to the estate had made but a slight sensation among his people. The tenantry of an English baron would have eaten and drunken, and shouted themselves hoarse with hurrahs for their new master. Sir Rolfe expected nothing of the kind. Such a welcome would have almost offended him. Torquil was in the very heart of the old Catholic district of the north, and in its religious and social aspects a flat contradiction to every other part of Scotland. Here the pious, melancholy Celt, cradled in mists and bringing his daily life into constant sympathy with the church, was both by nature and education inclined to a grave and serene seriousness.

He lived in nearly constant danger, either on the ocean or the wild, precipitous mountains; and he lived almost with prayer upon his lips. Centuries ago, the grand faith of Iona, Tyree and Coll had found among these somber lochs and dusky hills a fitting refuge, and under the little black-thatched cottages of Kintail and Tor.

quilt they had preserved the faith of their fathers. And not because they had been hidden away from the world and its trials; for to the last hour they stood by the Stuarts, fully comprehending that their loyalty included their religion.

In social life they remained quite apart. The names which thrilled the Lowland heart touched them not. They believed in King Fergus; they knew little of Sir William Wallace, and Robert Burns never sang for them. Duncan Ban MacIntyre and the seraphic psalms of their own saints touched them far more nearly. They were, however, neither rude nor ignorant, for one or two religious sanctuaries had always lifted their stately domes among these humble clachans, and pious priests and white-robed sisters had been their teachers and friends for unnumbered generations.

So Sir Rolfe expected only the mannerly, kind greeting which was gladly given him. The men came to their doors, as they passed, and lifted

their bonnets with a pious ejaculation. The women smiled placidly and dropped him a modest courtesy—a courtesy which expressed respect without a particle of servility. For they were all Mackenzies and Torquils; only Sir Rolfe was *The Torquil*, the head of their house, the chief of their sect, and, as such, entitled to their affection and respect.

He felt its sincerity, and it warmed his heart, and brought a mist of tears into his bright, stern eyes. He was telling himself, as he entered his children's presence, that no military honor or disciplined subservience could compare with regard so personal and so spontaneous. And their delight and love crowned his satisfaction, so that he went to his own rooms that night penetrated with grateful and pleasant emotions.

As Donald had anticipated, he took possession of the apartments always occupied by the barons of Tasmer. They were situated in the south wing, facing the sea, and connected with an oratory in the old central tower. It was neces-

sary that he should visit this oratory, for the most sacred charge of his father's dying hours referred to it. He sat for some time thinking, then he took from his pocket-book the last letter which he had received from the deceased baron, and he read the following portion :

“Be careful of the ivory beads you will find in the oratory; and do not be so foolish, son Rolfe, as to think all beyond your understanding superstition. I have been told, as I now tell you, that the fortune of Tasmer is, in some way unknown to me, influenced by them. They were brought here in A. D. 1133 by Murdo Torquil, a true knight, who followed Tancred to Sicily to the conquest of Jerusalem. He it was who built the church in which we still worship. Forget not to pray for your ancestors when you kneel before its altar. As he was dying he put the beads into the Torquil's hand, and with them a writing which a wise Augustine monk from Ferne, wrote out thus :

“ ‘Tellen these trewe wordse :

Whaune Tasmer's fortune shalle wane and faide,

Thaune aske of the beads of Tasmer aide.’ ”

Sir Rolfe read this portion over again, and as he refolded the letter, there was no doubt on his face. Slowly, and with a marked solemnity of

manner, he turned the key of the oratory door and closed it behind him. It was one of the small rooms contained *in the walls* of the tower ; but the stone had been covered with hangings of purple velvet. They were nearly a century old and frail with age, but the lustrous dye and strong silk pile of Genoa, even in decay, looked royal and handsome. The stone floor was uncovered, and there was only one piece of furniture in the room—a heavily carved oak lecturn, holding an open parchment breviary and a rosary of large ivory beads, beautifully cut, but yellow with age.

Light was admitted through a window of stained glass, and the last rays of the setting sun tinged with marvelous glory a large white crucifix standing clearly out against its purple background. With the holy sign Sir Rolfe lifted the beads, made rich by centuries of supplications, and kneeling at the foot of the cross, he recited not only the prayers appointed for the living, but also that solemn litany for the

dead whose intercession is by virtue of the cross :

“Give them, O Lord, eternal rest; and let perpetual light shine upon them.”





CHAPTER II.

ROBERTA.

"All the events of life are materials out of which we may make what we will." NOVALIS.

"He who loses not his senses in love, has no senses to lose."

"Beneath her eyelids deep
Love lying seems asleep—
Love, swift to wake, to weep,
To laugh, to dream."

There was sunshine and clear air, and a good blow of fresh wind; and in it the *Sea Bird* was dancing along the pulsing floor of the sea, and humming a pleasant tune as she went. She had been northward as far as the Gairloch, and was making for the little harbor of Torquil in the

morning light; and Angus Mackenzie and a couple of young lads were the whole of her crew, and they were as merry a company as ever journeyed along those storied, cheerless seas.

But this morning the gray Minch was dimpling all over, and the boat, with a good wind from the northwest, "went away like a lady." The comparison was Donald's. He was sitting with Angus on her deck, drinking their early cup of coffee. They were talking gayly, for they were always happy when they were together; and it was evident that they had been much together for some weeks, for Donald's skin had taken on that red-brown tint, which is only made by the salted wind of the sea.

Keeping well in shore, they were surrounded by multitudes of sea-birds, whose shrill cries mingled not unpleasantly with the ringing Gaelic of the boys, and the stirring sound of bouncing water.

"What are the lads singing, Angus?"

“A song about the *Rover of Rochryan*. It is a goot song whateffer. If you will be knowing it, you will say that it is a goot song.”

“How can I know it, when I understand so little Gaelic?”

“In the English, too, it will be terry well. They were saying it would be like this—if you will be hearing it,” and Angus rolled out the last verse of the spirited sea song with all his own peculiar intonations:

“Unstent and slack each reef and tack,
 Gi’e her sail, boys, while it may sit;
 She’s roar’d through a heavier sea before,
 An’ she’ll roar through a heavier yet.
 When landsmen sleep, or wake and creep,
 In the tempest’s angry moan,
 We dash through the drift, and sing to the lift
 Of the wave that heaves us on.”

“It is a good song, Angus, but I like Father Matthew’s song better.”

“There are other men, ay, there are other men who will be saying that also; for there

never was in the world such a boat-song as Father Matthew's song."

"Then let us sing it together as we are coming into harbor. Cheerily, Angus, sing with all your heart, and the birds will listen to us, and the wind and the water will be our chorus :

"Boat, that bears me through foam and squall,
You in the storm are my castle wall ;
Though the sea blacken from bottom to top,
From tiller to mast she takes no drop.

"On the tide top ! The tide top !
Wide, white breast of the cradling sea ;
On the tide top ! The tide top !
That is enough for my boat and me !

"She dresses herself, and goes gliding on,
Like a lady in robes of Indian lawn ;
For God has blessed her gunnel and wale,
And oh ! if you saw her stretch out to the gale,

"On the tide top ! The tide top !
Wide, white breast of the cradling sea ;
On the tide top ! The tide top !
That is enough for my boat and me.

“Old rocks, ahoy! Old hearts of stone!
Stooping so black o’er the beach alone,
Answer me true: On the bursting brine
Saw you ever a boat like mine?

“On the tide top! The tide top!
Wide, white breast of the cradling sea;
On the tide top! The tide top!
That is enough for my boat and me!”

They were singing as the boat cast anchor; and as Donald climbed the hill, he burst out again and again into the stirring, swinging melody. In the firs he became suddenly silent. A figure was approaching him—a tall, spare man, with an air of authority and contemplation. As they met, their faces brightened.

“Father, your blessing!” And in the twilight of the firs, the father’s hand was lifted a moment over the young head, reverently bared and bent.

“My son, God give you His blessing. Where have you been? It is the fifth day since you left Tasmer.”

“Northward to the Gairloch. It was a fine sail. If you had been with us, it would have been much better. Last night, off Scalpa, we sang the *Ave Mary*, and missed your help. Some fishing-boats were near, and they sang with us; but we missed your voice, dear Father.”

“Now, Donald, are you going home?”

“Yes, Father.”

“That is right. Sir Rolfe is troubled about you. You do not please him lately. A son should be obedient.”

Donald's face showed a little resentment.

“I try to be obedient. It is very hard sometimes, Father.”

“Have you considered well the words I gave you to read?—‘It is much more secure to be in a state of subjection than in authority.’”

“But a young man may have an opinion of his own?”

“‘If God be amongst us, we may sometimes give up our opinion for the sake of peace.’”

“But if I am certainly right?”

“‘Although thy opinion be good, yet if, for God's sake, thou leavest it, to follow that of another, it will be more profitable to thee.’ These are the counsels of one wiser and holier than most mortals.”*

He passed gravely on with the words, and Donald, troubled at the reproof and the obligation implied in it, reached Tasmer in an unhappy and dissatisfied mood. It was yet early, and in the entrance hall he saw Fergus, the oldest servant in the castle, pottering about among the antlers and shields and dusty old flags. As Donald appeared, he dropped all pretences, and went to meet him.

“It wass a goot wind that blew you home, Maistir Tonalt. Sir Rolfe is the angry man; the angriest man in all Ross, is he whateffer.”

“Have I done anything wrong, Fergus, while I was out of sight and hearing?”

* Thomas a Kempis—The following of Christ.—Chap. 9.

“ You haf been strafaiging aal over the Minch ; you haf been more as four days away ; and you know there iss company in the house, and Sir Rolfe is not in the mood to be doing the honors to any man, no, nor yet to the saints themselves.”

Donald made no further remark, but he went up-stairs to change his sea-suit, fretted and unhappy. With a heart full of love and of good intentions, he seemed quite unable to satisfy his father. It was scarcely the youth's fault, for the things in which he offended were parts and results of circumstances which Donald Torquil had no power to alter or control.

In the first place, his presence in the castle was not desirable. There was really no place for him, no duty to fulfil ; and as Sir Rolfe frequently suffered from those diseases common to East Indian officers, Donald was a constant presentation to the nervous, suspicious man, of an heir waiting for his decease. Generally, he knew well that the suspicion was false and cruel,

but there were hours when he half-believed it, and when it humored his ill-temper to say so. That momentary shadow of Donald in The Torquil's chair, which had darkened his own welcome home, was, in a dim, unacknowledged way, the key to the treatment of his son; perhaps because it interpreted some unvoiced regret or resentment in his own delayed inheritance.

Also, he was annoyed by his inability to provide for Donald without seriously curtailing his own plans. He felt that the youth ought to have his commission, but to give it to him would not only necessitate the outlay of much ready money, but also the obligation of an allowance sufficient to maintain the honor of the Torquils among his associates. It was true the late baron had thus provided for him, and often at serious personal inconvenience. He could remember years when his remittances must have been the result of great self-denial on the part of the whole Tasmer household. But he

told himself that he was placed in very different circumstances. The late baron had been a keen sportsman; he asked no other pleasure or occupation, and it was economically at his own doors.

The late baron had no daughter to marry; he was not therefore compelled to entertain company and to keep up the retinue fashionable society demanded. Sir Rolfe was fond of his daughter; his fatherly instinct toward her was without a breath of suspicion, and her beauty was a source of great pride to him. He was anxious to give her every advantage, and to do this, and also to make Donald the allowance suitable to an officer in a good cavalry regiment, was beyond his power. But he constantly reflected that Donald was only twenty-two years old, and that he could very well wait a little, and allow his sister to have such advantages as are supposed necessary for the matrimonial settlement of a girl.

It was such reflections as these which colored

the first weeks of life at Tasmer after Sir Rolfe's return. Still, no one becomes unkind or unjust at once. There must be an aggregation of small wrongs, and for these time is necessary. Other resisting powers against evil were also ever steadily at work. Sir Rolfe was yet, in the main, obedient to his confessor, Father Matthew Contach, a man of lofty ideals and spotless purity of action; and still his guardian angel, with prayers unutterable and never-ceasing vigils, kept watch over the soul committed to it; for other friends may grow weary, and lose patience, and cease to love, but a man's guardian angel is his soul's oldest and truest friend; from his first breath unto his last breath, it will never leave nor forsake him.

Eyes watch us that we cannot see,
Lips warn us that we may not kiss;
They wait for us—and starrily
Lean toward us from Heaven's lattices.*

* "For He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."—*Psalm* XCI; 11.

Thus swayed by opposing influences, Sir Rolfe was neither wholly good nor wholly bad. There were days in which his son's candid, joyous temper and handsome person gave him pride and pleasure, and in which he was kind and even just to him. In such a mood he had bought the *Sea Bird* for Donald, and told him while he was waiting his commission to make himself familiar with the neighboring coasts and islets.

"For," said he, as he solemnly signed himself, "they are girt with the solitary caves and ruined churches of the early saints."

The boat had been a real friend. When the domestic atmosphere was cloudy, Donald usually stole away in it, and found upon the ocean's breast the companionship and sympathy it has for all who love it. With his own unrest, its unrest blent, until both alike heard the divine whisper—"Peace! Be still." Or he drifted on placid seas into lovely bays, empty of all earth's noises, but full of the presence of God. Or

Angus Mackenzie went with him, and they had a real fight with wind and waves, and in the close strait between life and death, easily forgot the petty vexations for which there is no remedy but that sufferance so intolerable to impatient youth.

Very often, however, Angus could not go with him. The fishing had to be attended to, and Angus was his father's chief helper. So Donald ventured out with only a couple of boys from the village, and gradually learned how to manage the boat that was "his castle wall," and keep her cleverly "on the tide top." At first, when Angus was not with him, he hugged the shore closely, for the narrow seas were full of races and contrary currents, and also subject to sudden squalls, needing not only the most alert movements, but also a knowledge of the elements which was almost a prescience.

One day, soon after the *Sea Bird* had been given him, he wanted to go northward, but Angus could not leave the nets. It was an exquisite day in August; there would be a full

moon at night, and Donald felt all the magic of the lonely sea by anticipation. He was yet a novice about managing his boat, and in the afternoon of the second day, a breeze came out of the northeast, and flew round to the southeast, with a thunderstorm among the Alps of Torridon. He had only two lads with him, and thought it best to up helm and run for it. For a few miles the boat bore down the wind, the breeze hardening and the sea rising all the time. The small topmast was bending like a whip, and pretty soon it went with a crash that made Donald, for the moment, let go the helm with fright. After another blow, the topmast gear got tangled up with the main rigging, the hal-yards were badly jammed, and though boys are generally willing to do reckless things on a boat, Donald's helpers were quite unable to get the mess cut away.

Fortunately there was a little smack in sight. It rounded cleverly up alongside the *Sea Bird*, and one of the occupants asked what was the

mischief. But it was easier to see the mischief than to listen to any description of it, and before Donald had finished speaking, the interrogator and a girl who stood by his side were on board. Then no explanations were necessary. The girl took the helm, and the man went to work with a will, and with Donald's help, the loose gear was cast adrift and the boat made as snug as was possible under the circumstances. The smack had sheared off. The wind was rising, the waves running wildly, and after a busy, wet hour, Donald was glad to find the *Sea Bird*, under the girl's hand, making for a misty little cove in the shadow of Ben Bhreach.

Very soon they were in smooth water, and then Donald looked more closely at his helpers. The man was evidently a clergyman. When he put back his fisher's oil-skins he showed the black broadcloth and white bands of his profession ; and ere Donald could speak, he said :

" I am David Balfour, Free Kirk minister of Ullerloch. Yonder stone house is my manse,

and both I and my daughter Roberta will be glad to give you shelter to-night. It will be a bad night, Roberta !”

“ It will be a very bad night—at sea.”

Then Donald turned to the girl who still stood by the helm. She had flung back from her head the tartan hood which had hitherto almost hid her face, and she fully enjoyed Donald’s surprise. For Roberta Balfour was no ordinary Scotch beauty ; many people doubted if she were a beauty at all. Her own sex was inclined to deny her even a moderate share of good looks ; but to those who could feel the girl’s charm, she was of the grandest type of womanhood, tall, supple, strong, full of an intense vitality, with the free, haughty carriage of a young deer on the mountains. Her head was large and finely formed ; she had a great deal of black hair, strong and wavy ; a wide, low brow ; large brown eyes ; a nose rather flat, and broad at the end, with wide nostrils ; and a well-formed chin below a lovely mouth, red and full,

and showing white, even teeth. When Donald first saw her, it was under unusually favorable circumstances. She loved the sea, and in an encounter with its roughest moods rose to her grandest beauty.

She added a few words of welcome to her father's invitation, and crowned them with a smile beyond all words. The evening was like some blessed trance to Donald. He saw her moving about the manse parlor, making tea, filling the minister's pipe, lighting the candles; and he heard her speaking in some glorified tongue, that only men in love ever hear. Her clear, musical laugh moved his pulses in a joyful measure; her little plaintive songs made him divinely sad. He could not sleep; he did not want to sleep. He sat by the fire in a kind of rapture, and thought over every change in her exquisite face and every tone in her voice. He recalled her moods and attitudes. He could have wept with joy.

"I have found her whom my soul loveth," he

said, softly ; and the noblest nature of the man was touched by the reflection. " Blessed Virgin Mary," he whispered, " Lover of all pure women, to Thee I offer the first moments of my delight."

And then humbly kneeling, he recited the five joyful mysteries and the *Salve Regina*. Doubtless, it was the first time the Blessed Among Women had been honored under the roof ; but Donald thought not, and felt not, any incongruity in the whole universe. He had listened to the minister reading his appointed portion and making his usual household prayer, and that as well as all which had been said and done, had only been a part of the wonderful state in which he found himself.

For two days he lingered at Ellerloch. He climbed the hills with Roberta ; he sailed the bay with her. They went into the garden together, and he helped her to gather the late roses, and the raspberries and currants for the table. He had found his Eden, and, *as yet*, nothing that could trouble had entered it.



CHAPTER III.

CROSS PURPOSES.

It is needless to say that Donald's visits to Ellerloch were constantly repeated. Under Roberta's instructions he soon became expert in handling a boat on that coast. He got to know every shadow from the blue Canisp and the white crests of Torridon—in fact, Sir Rolfe had just cause to complain of his continual absence, his dislike to Tasmer, and his apparent infatuation for salt water.

But his disapproval did not touch the real truth. He suspected no love affair. He was quite sure that Donald delighted in his boat because she was his own—because he was master within her small boundaries—because to be

at sea released him from all obligations to himself.

Naturally this belief was irritating. Sir Rolfe was fond of authority, and he had been used to exercise it. Donald was very like a deserter in his eyes. The assurance of Fergus that Sir Rolfe was the angriest man in Ross was not that September morning very much exaggerated. And by this time Donald had begun to realize that his father had some cause to be angry. He had spent the past five or six weeks journeying between Torquil and Ellerloch. If the journey had been the business of the *Sea Bird*, he could not have been more regularly upon the waterway.

He expected his father's call with some trepidation. He was prepared to make apologies and promises. But a night's sleep had calmed Sir Rolfe. God's good angels visit men a-dreaming, and God has lessons for the night season. Many a man goes to bed angry, and rises chidden and quiet; and he tells no one who

has been reasoning with him or reproving him. Donald was astonished and touched by his father's gentleness; he felt ashamed of his neglect, and said so.

"Father, I have made a selfish use of your gift, I fear. I have been so happy with the *Sea Bird*, that I have neglected you and Sara. I will do better."

"The winter weather will help you, Donald. However, your duty will now be at Tasmer. Have you heard that we have visitors?"

"Fergus told me of Lord Lenox and a Mr. Maclane."

"Yes. Lenox is the son of an old comrade. He has inherited very unexpectedly. I met him in London."

"I never heard you speak of Mr. Maclane."

"I do not know him particularly. He is a friend of Lord Lenox. But he is very rich, and I expect him to rent Glen Mohr as a shooting-ground next year. I shall put up a 'box' for him before then; at the present, however, he is

our guest for a short time. You will, of course, do all you can to make the visit agreeable."

He spoke in a hurried, decided way, as if to prevent any expression of opinion. Donald was not prepared to speak, and, indeed, he hardly knew what to say. A sense of indignation was in his heart, but he was compelled to restrain the feeling. How could he interfere with his father's plans? He remembered that once before, when he had offered some objections to a very trivial matter, Sir Rolfe had haughtily reminded him that he would have the right to alter it when he was Baron of Tasmer.

And yet his burning cheeks and air of restraint did not escape Torquil.

"Donald will be hard to manage," he reflected; "but, willing or unwilling, the thing must be done. I stood at bay in the Kyber Pass, thirty to one against me, and came out victor. Shall I let Donald and a few peasants, or even Father Contach, move me? No! By every Torquil that has lived before me, I will

do for Tasmer the thing I know is the best. Donald may be against me, but they that were before me will be my helpers—there is a good company of them, even if I go no further back than Knight Murdo Torquil. He could think forward for his race; why should not I?" And then, moved by some sudden impulse, he went into the oratory, lifted the old knight's beads and knelt down with them in his hands.

In the meantime, Donald had gone to his sister's room. She had been in the fir-woods, and still sat before the fire with her mantle around her and her bonnet in her hand. An air of melancholy or dissatisfaction was on her face. She did not answer Donald with her usual impulsive affection. Half-wearily she turned her head and ejaculated:

"You, Donald!"

"Whom else did you expect?"

"Any one but you. You live at sea—or somewhere else—now. Your talk is of the Gairloch, but there are lochs nearer, perhaps."

"Are you cross, Sara?"

"No; but I am a little out of heart, Donald. Things have not been as we expected, have they? Father is changed; there is no use trying to ignore the fact. He has one idea now—money. I see that every one and everything is to serve this end."

"What has he said to you?"

"That the estate has been sinfully mismanaged and neglected. He thinks it is his mission to redeem it. He refers constantly to the Lenox property, which marches north and east with Tasmer. It was almost bankrupt when Simon Lovat took it in charge; now, it is steadily becoming valuable. Lovat has been to see father several times. They talk and talk, and after every interview father is more thoughtful and disagreeable."

"Do you know what Lovat proposes?"

"Father will tell you soon enough. I hear of 'clearances' continually. There are thirty-six cotters' families in Glen Easter, and Lovat urges

their removal. Glen Mohr and Ben Torquil and Torquil Woods are to be let—*let*, Donald—as hunting-parks. There is not a clachan on the estate, or a rood of land that is not under consideration.”

“It is the doing of Lord Lenox.”

“He advised father, doubtless.”

“And it is infamous.”

“It is—as it is.”

“And pray, what have Lord Lenox and this Mr. Maclane to do with Tasmer?”

“Mr. Maclane will pay two thousand pounds a year for shooting over Glen Mohr. Think of that! The Torquil never had as much ready money at one time before. Lord Lenox brought him here; they came last night, and were off to the hills by daybreak. Rory Mackenzie and Ban MacIntyre are gillying them. Father was angry that you were not at home to go with the party.”

“I am not going to—”

“What nonsense! They are our guests.”

"Guests do not pay two thousand pounds a year for a little shooting. Fancy grandfather renting out a few grouse."

"But Lord Lenox is our guest and Mr. Mac-lane is his friend."

"Do you like them?"

"I have seen them for about three hours. Lenox is handsome, masterful, perhaps cunning. I may wrong him. Maclane, I should think, is a right-headed, right-hearted man. But I was thinking of many other things last night; they came very unexpectedly, the castle was not in condition for visitors, and I was troubled about my own dress. Oh, dear me, Donald! I feel as if we were in the shadow of some long calamity. Our happy past is over."

"As for the past, let it go, Sara. It is like a fire burned out; it cannot be rekindled. But I see no reason for you to sigh over the future. Father Matthew told me to make a special prayer against that sin. He said it was a great folly if I saw a stone in the road to immediately

begin wondering what I should do if the stone became a wall, and I had to get over it. Perhaps if there is a stone in our way we may pass around it or throw it out of the way. At any rate, it is not a wall just yet, Sara."

Sara rose and drew her mantle around her. There was an expression of determination on her lovely face. It was evident that her womanly instinct had divined the tendency of events as yet scarcely spoken of.

"You will see, Donald," she said, sadly, "that for the glory of Tasmer, father will demand our entire co-operation. You will be expected to work with Lovat in its 'clearance;' I to marry whoever can bring it prosperity."

"Every Torquil is my kin. I will help no man, not even father, to drive them from Torquil braes or Tasmer hills. And if I am true to them, you will be true to yourself, Sara? Oh, I know you will be true to yourself!"

"I can be true as you are to the Torquils. They are my kin also."

There was a moment's silence, and then Sara moved slowly toward the door. Donald intercepted her, took her hands, and said, with eyes humid with feeling:

"Dearest sister, marry no man unless you love him. That is a sacrifice far too great. Marriage without love! Who can measure such a sorrow, such a degradation?"

"Are you in love? You speak as if you were, Donald."

"I fear these guests. Lord Lenox—"

"Is too poor. Father thinks not of him."

"And Mr. Maclane?"

"Is certainly very rich; but—"

"But what, Sara?"

"Love is not bought in the market-place." And with the open door in her hand, she threw back to him a glance so radiant, so commanding and self-sufficient, that she seemed to stand for a moment in its glory and to make sunshine where she stood.



CHAPTER IV.

UNDERCURRENTS.

We do but guess at one another darkly 'mid the strife
That thickens round us ; in this life of ours
We are like players, knowing not the powers
Nor compass of the instruments we vex,
And by our rash, unskillful hands perplex
To straining discords."

"What talk is there of fathers, when there is such a man
as Orlando?"

After his conversation with his sister, Donald took his gun, and passing through the fir-wood at its narrowest part, was soon on the wild heath beyond it. He was not a keen sportsman, and this morning his solitude was more to him than game. After an hour's tramp, he came suddenly in sight of a grand stag—a mighty

beast, with a stretch of horns like the half of a cart-wheel. From his nostrils the breath was pouring like smoke, and his great yellow body glistened in the sun. Donald could see the perfect cup of three points surmounting either antler, and the animal's bellowing filled the little corrie with its hollow, angry roar. He could have shot him easily, and for a moment was inclined to do so. "For he is a ten-pointer, if not a royal," he thought, "and it would be something of a triumph to take home such a prize—a respectable introduction to Lenox and Maclane—and father would like it, I know." But he deliberately let the chance pass. "Poor fellow! Why should I slay him? He is so eager and happy;" and with the thought the gun was lowered.

The kind act put him into one of his best moods; after it, he had no desire to kill the birds around him. The cock grouse strutted fearlessly with his mate within easy range, and Donald was content to watch the bird's bright

crimson comb and rich, brown plumage, and to smile at his lordly attentions to the plainer hen-bird. The whirring creatures did not otherwise stir him; even the *kick-ic-ic* of a covey of grouse put no tingle in his fingers. For a good soul has infinite relationships with nature, full of mystery in their beginnings, but leading it to the glow of sacrifice and the ideality of love by ways quite incomprehensible.

Donald's love made him a better man. Thinking of Roberta, he was always astonished to find himself capable of actions above the usual standard of his life. Thus, in some way, it was Roberta that saved the stag's life, and gave the cock-grouse and his shy mate safety. He was so happy in his love, and yet there appears to be a divine necessity for joining joy and sorrow together. As surely as we climb some mount of happiness, we find that the way of sorrow lies parallel with it. Donald was so happy, and yet he was anxious and unhappy; for Sara's

words had only put into tangible form vague suspicions familiar to his heart.

He perceived that great changes were to take place at Tasmer; he understood that any change there must, in some way, re-act upon his own life. He was curious, and yet uneasy, about their visitors; he had an idea that people who were permitted to come in contact with other existences had some message to deliver to them, or some influence to exert upon them. They were to be the touch of fate.

So musing, with Roberta Balfour always as an underlying thought, he wandered until the short winter day began to close. Without being conscious of it, he had instinctively drawn near to the ocean. Forever it called to his soul as a mother calls to her child. In joy or sorrow, in doubt or tremor of any kind, Donald felt its mysterious attraction creep into his blood, and he answered the voice that no one but himself heard. To-night, it was tossing at his feet, and echoing with sounds that said:

"Come! Come! Come!" plainly enough to him.

He turned reluctantly away from the temptation; catching in the gray light the gray sails of the *Sea Bird*, and feeling an almost irresistible longing to be in her snug cabin on the tide top. The castle was all alight as he emerged from the gloom of the firs; and a great wood-fire threw shifting lustres and shadows over arms and antlers and thick modern rugs and heavy furniture. In the silver wall-sconces there was also a profusion of light, and Donald wondered, as he went up the usually dim stairway, what motive Sir Rolfe had in such extravagance.

It had the effect, however, of making him particularly careful as to his own appearance, and if any old thane of Ross could have seen the slim, handsome youth in his broadcloth and fine linen, he must have wondered greatly at his descendant. He found Sara already in the drawing-room, and looking exceedingly beautiful. Her dress of blue silk added some marvel-

ous charm to the dull glow of her hair and the snow and rose of her complexion, and Donald looked at her with a brotherly pride and pleasure.

They were standing together on the hearth-rug, in a loving, confidential attitude, when Mr. Maclane entered the room. He thought they were the handsomest couple he had ever seen, and he stood still a moment to please himself with the living picture. Then Sara turned, and holding Donald's hand, went forward a few steps to meet him.

"This is my brother, Mr. Maclane—my brother Donald. And what kind of sport have you had, sir?"

"I am glad to see you, sir; and as for sport, Miss Torquil, I think the pleasures of sport are very much overrated. I have been wading through marshes, I have had my feet wet, and shivered up and down hills, and worn myself out with carrying a gun. I have killed three fine cock grouse and a few hens, and I feel like a

murderer. I only hope I shall not be asked to eat my victims."

"That is not the usual way of describing a day's shooting, sir," said Donald, smiling.

"No, I suppose it is not."

"Yet I have been in thorough sympathy with you to-day. I took my gun to the hills, but I could not make up my mind to destroy life either. The innocent creatures were so happy. If I had fired, I should have felt like an assassin."

"Come now, I like that—and from a young man, too! I think we are going to be friends, sir."

He spoke with an air of candor there was no resisting, although he was not what is usually called a handsome or fascinating man. Nature had not carefully finished her work in Andrew Maclane; but he was cast in a noble mold, and the difficulties and struggles of his life had given, combined with intelligent and persevering culture, an almost sculptural appearance to features

originally not fine. He spoke with the burr, and something also of the homely *patois* of a man born just south of the Solway, and it was worth while hearing him speak to a fool according to his folly. He had been always engaged in business, and he was now the hand to which a thousand other hands were extended. And yet he had ever found time for communion with books; indeed, hitherto, he had been fonder of books than of men; and had made his best friends in the land of shadows, among images of departed heroes and benefactors.

He was so honest, that Donald understood in five minutes that he was in love with Sara; that it was very likely his first love for woman, and would just as likely be his last. He could not conceal his admiration, although it was blent with a humility which would probably be his worst antagonist; for what woman ever thought better of a lover for his timidity?

As they stood thus together, Sir Rolfe and Lord Lenox entered. Sir Rolfe had a moment's

in intense satisfaction in the fine appearance of his children. "They are true Torquils," he thought, and he cast a momentary glance at his companion, as if to judge what effect so much personal beauty had upon him.

But Lord Lenox was not a man easy to read. He did not permit his countenance to index his emotions, and its general expression was of that complex character which is the natural result of complex civilization. He was the young man of his generation, who had been everywhere, and who could do everything—selfish, ambitious, but withal notably good-looking, and possessed of that air of distinction only given by intercourse with men on the highest social peaks. Lenox, moreover, was a genuine sportsman. He could imagine no greater pleasure than following grouse through the heather—or waiting for a red stag on the misty mountain tops—or putting a fine grilse through its facings, with fifty yards of line.

Maclane was a different man. The love of

the chase—inherent in all—had in his case been directed toward wealth, power and position. He had neither the natural aptitude nor the physical stay necessary for a recreation that was indeed repugnant to him in other respects. With far greater zest, he turned with Donald to the sea and the boats.

“If I am to get wet and be untidy, I would rather be wet with fresh salt water than with black moss water,” he said, “and I like the swing of the boat far better than tramping about steep hillsides. And then, Donald, there is no necessity to kill anything at sea. It would not be ‘sport’ to shoot that diver in motley, and her red-breasted swain, or even to bag that ugly, greedy-looking cormorant flapping his dark vans and protruding his long bare neck. Would it?”

When Maclane made this remark they were on the *Sea Bird*, sailing easily before the wind. The mysteries of the northern night were gathering around them, pale-sailed ships vanish-

ing like phantoms beyond the horizon, and along the restless sea shadows everywhere fighting the cold lights falling from moon and stars to pierce and scatter them. The eerie sense of the lonely, ancient ocean, soon grew predominant. The present life became faint; they began to talk solemnly of things beyond it. And it is such subjects that unlock the hearts of men, and make them free of each other's best nature; for very few are as irreligious as they appear to be.

Donald was touched by confidence so freely given him by a man many years his senior, and who had proved his manhood by conquering poverty and ignorance and taking his place among the nobles and law-givers of his age. In return, he felt that he must be equally frank, but there was nothing in his young life that appeared worth talking about but Roberta Balfour.

"My days had been spent in study and play," he said, "until I met her. She discovered my

soul to me. It is only about two months old, I think."

"Do you think that? Oh, no, Donald! If you have really thought on that subject, you must feel that your soul is older than any reckoning. It had no age when it was incarnated. It will have no age when it shall free itself from your mortal vesture. It will not grow old in eternity. But let us sail as far as Ellerloch. I would like to see this girl you love so dearly. Is she handsome?"

"I think so; but when one discovers the soul, the body is not much. It is Roberta I love, and yet I am not indifferent to the sweetness of her voice, the charm of her bright face, and the grace of all her motions. Oh, no! Altogether she is perfect. You will agree with me, I am sure."

"And her father?"

Donald's face fell a little.

"He is a good man, I believe that; but he is quiet and grave, and, I think, a little stern; more

so lately than when I first knew him. I am sure that he understands that I love Roberta."

"You ought to speak to him, Donald. Set your love in a clear atmosphere—the sanction of earth and heaven—that is what it asks, and ought to have."

"Yes, but I am afraid to speak. Did I tell you that Mr. Balfour was a Protestant minister—a Free-Kirk minister?"

"No. A Free-Kirk minister and a Scotch Lowlander. Oh, Donald, I think that will complicate matters very much. I know the type: ruggedly conscientious and immovable as the Bass Rock about a principle. Balfour is a name among their worthies. Possibly he is of Covenanting stock; and if so, he looks upon the Shorter Catechism as the pillar of immortal salvation and the Magna Charta of Scotland's safety and prosperity. Does he know that you are a Roman Catholic?"

"I am not sure. I have not told him, and he is only a stranger in Ross. Four years ago he

came from Galloway. In his own rough boundaries, among the shepherds and fishers, he is almost worshiped. He is a better sailor than many of them; he is a good fisher; he is a learned scholar. Roberta says he is an eloquent preacher. I never heard him, but I know that he is a good pastor and no mean physician. His people rely on him for help in all their sickness and in all their sorrow."

"He is a wonderful man, Donald. What is he doing in an obscure Highland parish?"

"Oh, indeed! Maclane, it is the obscure parishes that need the wonderful men. Look at Father Contach! He ought to be a bishop, and he is content to be a priest of Torquil. Don't you think that a poor country priest fighting against the devil in his parish has a nobler and a harder fight than Alexander had?"

"No one can gainsay you, Donald. But it is the part of honor as well as of duty and prudence to speak plainly to Mr. Balfour. Roberta

is his only child ; if he loves her he will surely sacrifice his prejudices to make her happy."

"She is very dear to him. Will you really go as far as Ellerloch and see him ? You could say much for me that I cannot say for myself. Then, when you have prepared the way, I, also, will speak."

The proposal was not unpleasant to Maclane. He was happy at sea. He liked Donald's society ; and he was glad of an opportunity to bind the young man to him by some such service. For his own heart was set upon Sara Torquil, and he was accustomed to compass all his desires by careful attention to every favorable ally.

The weather was not unpleasant. There was a young moon riding cold and still beyond the shifting clouds, and there was a bright starlight. In the gray glimmer they sat and talked, while the *Sea Bird* kept gallantly on her northern course. Just when there was a streak of lemon in the east, Donald sighted the low, gray manse

at Ellerloch. Maclane was asleep; but the lover's heart and longing had kept him awake.

Simple as Mr. Balfour's life was, it was scarcely possible to call upon him before breakfast; and, indeed, Donald hoped he would see the boat, and come to the pier and ask them to take the meal with him. He had frequently done so in the beginning of their friendship; and, although lately the kindness had been generally omitted, Donald never could get over the hope of its renewal.

Balfour saw the boat. Its fluttering flag was the first thing that met his eyes when he rose. The sight was evidently not one that gave the minister pleasure. His strong, rugged face grew as hard as if it were carved out of granite. But a great nicety about his raiment was one of David Balfour's characteristics, and this morning he did not neglect it. He brushed every speck of dust from his decent black coat, and threw aside one set of lawn neckbands because they fell short of the immaculate whiteness he

demanded. But it was pride in office, rather than personal pride which made him so exacting. He was a servant of the King of Kings, and he felt that it behooved him to be pure in person as in heart. Yet he was much disturbed as he proceeded with his toilet. His lips parted continually in short ejaculations, regrets, resolves and quotations from The Book.

“I have always heard that to save a stranger from the sea was to bring calamity on one's own house. It's like it! What for did I go to the help of yonder youth? He was neither kith nor kin of mine. Think shame of yourself, David Balfour! A man in trouble is more than kith or kin. If I have done foolishly, God save me from the harvest of my folly. My trust is in the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in all times of trouble—what for am I thinking of trouble? A young man's fancy and a young girl's dream; that is all of the argument. But it is time it was settled, and I'll settle it this very day, and then

I'll have neither word nor wittens of the matter again."

To such musings he deliberately dressed himself, neither omitting nor hurrying any of his usual duties. When he entered the parlor, his heart felt that sudden glow of pious gratitude which every one experiences more or less in the actual presence of pleasant and comfortable surroundings. The fire was a picture in itself. It was in an old-fashioned basket-grate, glowing and blazing and crackling high up above a hearth-stone pipe-clayed white as snow. The brass fender and irons, the bright rug, the round table so prettily laid, the delicious smell of broiled salmon and hot cakes and good coffee—the general air of comfort and refinement, filled his soul with a sweet and gracious gratitude. The household Bible lay open upon its stand near his own chair. He went straight to it, and put his hand upon it, and said, softly :

"Bless the Lord, oh, my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy Name!"

He was reciting the thanksgiving psalm when Roberta entered the room. Hearing her foot-step he finished it, and then turned to meet her. Never had her beauty struck him so forcibly ; perhaps it was at this moment that he first realized how beautiful she was. Evidently she, also, had seen the *Sea Bird*. She had put on her best dress, a dark-blue cloth one, with a plain, ample skirt, a tightly-fitting bodice, and narrow bands of white linen at the throat and wrists. She needed no ornaments ; gold bracelets and brooches and rings would have been " barbaric gold " on such an incarnation of vital beauty. She had the dew of her youth, the glow of the fresh, salt air, a color that no words can describe, an air of happiness, of freedom, of grace, that imparted itself like an atmosphere to the room as soon as she stood within it.

" Good-morning, father. Here is the *Sea Bird* again."

" I have seen it, Roberta."

" Are you not glad, father ?"

"You will be able to take care of yourself with that young man, Roberta? It is little we know of him; and I am not caring to know more."

"Father!"

"One will require to act judiciously, Roberta, with a person coming north with every wind that blows. He'll be having a reason, and when a guest comes with a reason, there will be two sides to it, and we must watch for our own side. That is only prudent and right, Roberta."

"You have been having bad dreams, father, or you have a touch of rheumatism, or there has been an evil spirit in your sleeping-room whispering bad, suspicious thoughts in your ear while you were sleeping. I never heard a more unkind observation from you."

"Answer me this—answer me this, Roberta: Whom does young Torquil come here to see? Is it I, or is it you?"

"How can I tell?"

"Let us have no prevarication. If you were

not here, do you think the *Sea Bird* would come to Ellerlock again? Tell me the truth, Roberta."

"She might not come so often."

"She would not come at all."

"I think Donald does like me."

"You know well he likes you. Why think or suppose about the thing you are sure of? Very well—or very ill, more likely—why does he not speak to me, as an honest man should, and say: 'I want to marry your daughter, sir; and I have thus and so, to warrant my offer?' Why does he not tell me who and what he is? If he wants to marry you, that is the way an honest man would do it."

"Father, people do not bargain about wives, as they used to do. Money questions are not to be mixed up with love."

"You are very much mistaken, Roberta. What do you know about love and marriage? Money questions, in one shape or other, are at the foundation of marriage. An honest lover

lays this foundation with the father before he talks love with the daughter. If the foundation is solid, you may build upon it all the air-castles you fancy. I am not pleased at Donald Torquil's ways. I'll say that plump and plain. And he will have to mend them if he would keep his welcome warm."

"Do you not think that fathers can be too cautious? Age and experience may not know everything. I speak respectfully, father."

"Whoever said that age and experience knew everything? You will allow, though, that it is very likely fifty-five years may know more than eighteen years?"

"Father, we have not had a nice breakfast, and it is your fault; I was so happy when I saw the *Sea Bird*. After the exercise do go and meet Donald. If you have had a temptation in the night, give it the back of your hand behind you. Donald is a good young man; good and true. Go and meet him kindly. It is beginning

to rain, and we may have a storm. You cannot shut your door against him, father."

"Well, well! I see, Roberta, that you have arled your heart to him; but you'll mind this: If I find out that he is not a good youth, if he is not fit to be your husband, I will not allow him to speak another word to you. That is as fact as death. I'll no need to say it again."

Then he arose and called in his household, and read the appointed portion, and sang the proper psalm, and prayed with an unfaltering faith and fervor. His eyes were shining and moist when he rose from his knees, and he spoke kindly to Roberta, as he put on his plaid and hat, and went down to the sea-shore.

The clouds had fallen low, and were beating themselves against the earth in those whiffs of sharp rain so common on the west coast; and Roberta knew the cabin of the *Sea Bird* would be damp and uncomfortable. "Then father will be sorry for Donald," she thought, "and he will

bring him here; and I know that I may expect them in half an hour at any rate."

In much less time she saw them coming, and perceived also with some curiosity that they were accompanied by a stranger. "He looks far older than Donald; perhaps he is Donald's father;" and she put more fuel on the fire, and flecked the last speck of dust from the hearth, and ran up-stairs to see if her own hair and collar were in perfect order. By that time, the three gentlemen were in the small hall, and she went to meet them with the flush and light of welcome on her face.

Greatly to her surprise and pleasure, she perceived that her father had some knowledge of Mr. Maclane. They had become friends at once, and were soon so deeply interested in their own conversation that Donald easily slipped away from them to Roberta, who was in a small, light pantry making the pastry for the day's dinner.

"Father appears delighted to meet your friend, Donald. Are they old acquaintances?"

“Politically so. Maclane, who is a Member of Parliament, wrote a pamphlet in favor of the Scotch church, when she was in the thick of her late fight with the government; a very clever pamphlet, indeed, Mr. Balfour thinks. Fancy Maclane writing a pamphlet, or bothering himself about church government, with all else he has to do!”

“Indeed, Donald, church government is a very important affair. Father gave up one of the finest livings in Scotland on that very question. ‘There is in it all the majesty of the Free Kirk,’ as somebody said. I hear they have gone into the study, and if father begins to introduce his friends, it may take them all day to get through.”

“Especially as Maclane is a great book-lover also. Oh, Roberta, what a happy day we are going to have!”

For once fate was kind to all. Mr. Balfour and Mr. Maclane were in perfect harmony. As iron sharpeneth iron, their minds caught light

and brilliancy from contact. Book after book was taken from the wealthy shelves and commented upon, and though, in the main, their opinions were at one, there were still differences sufficient to give their conversation a brisk and piquant individuality.

Such intellectual contact was a rare mental treat to Mr. Balfour, and he gave himself up entirely to its enjoyment; yet, amid all, he had a constant sense of his responsibility regarding Donald Torquil and his daughter. But if it had been difficult to speak hitherto, it was doubly so this day. Before a stranger whom he honored, he could scarcely introduce a subject so personal, and one which, perhaps, would have to terminate in an entire withdrawal of his courtesy and friendship from Donald. Such hours of mental refreshment came to him so rarely, he could not bear to mar their harmony, and he resolved to suffer the relationship of the young people to go unchallenged during this visit.

But no man may put back the hour of fate;

and the knowledge which he had both desired and dreaded was given him in the most unconscious manner. It was not, however, until the visit was nearly over, and every one of the party had appreciated the enjoyment of thirty hours of such serene and innocent pleasure as rarely comes to mortals. Balfour and Mr. Maclane had expressed their different views on all their favorite topics, and Donald and Roberta had assured themselves, in many a sweet way, how unanimous their opinions were on the one only topic that filled their hearts. They had all enjoyed Roberta's excellent cooking, they had sung some old songs together, and together felt the calm of the evening exercise; and by thus mingling the joys of sense and soul, had tasted the purest cup of happiness.

Sweet sleep and a calm breakfast followed the pleasant day, and about ten o'clock they rose to depart. The sky was clear, the wind at their back, and the sea had been beaten smooth by the heavy rain.

"We shall make a quick trip home," said Donald, his spirits insensibly rising, as he thought of the lively *Sea Bird* flying before the wind.

He had Roberta's hand clasped in his own, and they were walking slowly together across the shingle to the small pier. Mr. Balfour and Maclane were a little behind them. They were a trifle quiet and sad.

"I am sorry to leave you so soon, Balfour, but I shall never forget the day I spent with you."

"Shall I not see you again before you go to southward?"

"Not this year. My visit to Sir Rolfe Torquil is over; but it is likely I may rent a shooting-range from him next year."

"Then Donald's father is a nobleman?"

"Has he not told you so? That is like Donald. Anything that would look like boasting would be hateful to him. He is a fine fellow."

“Still he should have told me. I have a daughter—you see that he has won her love; a baronet may think his son too noble for her!”

“Miss Balfour outranks any man, I care not what his station.”

“I surely think so. She is the daughter of one of God’s ministers, and he is king of kings. I have never heard Donald speak of brothers; is he the only son?”

“The only son, and the heir. At present they are not rich, but the estate is large, and can be made very profitable under the new method. The family is a very old one; the Torquils have been in Ross ‘since the floods whateffer,’ as one of their gillies told me.”

“I have no skill in these Highland genealogies, and I am a stranger in Ross.”

“They have held their own well. I suppose their isolation has saved them, for they have been a restless lot. It took Culloden to cure them.”

"Culloden cured many restless, troublesome families. They were for the Stuarts, then?"

"Rank Jacobites. It was a matter of conscience with them. The Stuarts represented Catholicism, so they fought for the Stuarts. As a race, they considered them far from being 'pretty fellows.' The Torquils were too ruggedly brave and honest for any other opinion."

"Then they are Roman Catholics? They are Roman Catholics at the present time? Donald Torquil is a Roman Catholic? Do you mean to tell me these things are so?" He spoke with a stern decision, and stood still, and looked squarely into Maclane's face for the answer.

"Certainly, sir. Donald is a very devout Catholic. Without pretense or demonstration, I yet consider him a sincerely religious young man. The fact has struck me very pleasantly. It is a rare characteristic in young men now."

"I am very sorry. Very sorry, indeed."

"Sorry that the young man is religious?"

"That he is a Roman Catholic. You must

understand this information means a heart-break to my Roberta. He ought to have told us—he ought to have told us! He has behaved very badly. I will not speak to him again. I cannot speak now. Permit me to say farewell to you here, and make what apology you please for me. I will not see the young man now. I must think over the matter. It is a great blow to me, sir.”

He showed it so plainly, Maclane understood the wisdom of his resolve. He had lost every vestige of color; his eyes were somber and troubled; he could scarcely command his voice. For a moment or two, they stood saying the few courteous words that were all they could say under the circumstances. Donald and Roberta had gone on board; they were so interested in themselves they had forgotten their companions. Mr. Balfour pointed out this fact, and turned away with an angry dejection, a look of mingled reproach, fear and sorrow, such as Maclane had never before seen, and which he knew he should never forget.

The wretched father went straight to his home. He was angry when he parted with Maclane; his anger gathered with every moment of Roberta's stay; and she lingered something longer than was necessary. The fresh wind, the bright morning, the presence of Donald, all tempted her to delay. She also grieved that her father should, for any reason, omit the last courtesy to Donald. Maclane, scarcely knowing how to excuse him, had blundered out something concerning a forgotten engagement—a thing Roberta did not believe in. So, partly as a compensation to her lover, and partly as a symptom of disapproval to her father, she stayed upon the *Sea Bird* until Mr. Balfour was well minded to put on his hat and plaid and go and bring her home.

At this climax of his anger and impatience, she returned. He saw she had been crying; that she was inclined to be silent and indifferent; that, in short, all her fine spirits and sunny smiles and pretty ways had disappeared with

Donald, and he naturally enough resented the secondary place to which he had fallen.

"What is the matter with you, Roberta?"

"Nothing, father."

"Why have you then altered so much? You were gay enough an hour ago."

"Circumstances have changed, father."

"You mean that Donald Torquil is no longer here to be charmed?"

"Donald was badly treated. Why did you not come fifty yards further and say good-bye to him? I was ashamed of you, father; and I never was ashamed of you before."

"Never dare to say such words to me again, Roberta. When it is a question between a father and a lover, a good girl will believe her father to be right until she knows he is wrong. You have known me all your life—known me intimately; you have known this youth a few weeks, and that only very slightly—whom should you trust first?"

"I hate that Maclane. I am sure he has told you some wicked lies about Donald."

"He told me that, which if Donald Torquil had been a gentleman, he himself had told me long ago. He told me that Donald is a Roman Catholic; that his family have always been Roman Catholics—Jacobites and Roman Catholics! Followers of the bloody Stuarts, and all their tyrannies and abominations!"

"The Stuarts are dead and gone, all of them. Is Donald to be hated for his ancestors?"

"Yes, he is! If a man is to be honored for his ancestors, just and right also is it that he should be hated for them. Because of what my ancestors did for the Covenant I have honor this day. Because of what Donald's ancestors did against freedom and the kirk of Scotland, he shall have scaith and dishonor this day. Both conclusions are just. If the fathers eat sour grapes, then the teeth of the children must be set on edge. It is the word of the Lord, and I trust that neither I nor bairn of mine will dare

to set themselves against the ways of the Almighty's council."

"What is your meaning, father? Say the straight word to me. I do not want to hear Donald preached about."

"Do you want the straight, plain word? You shall have it. It is that you neither shall see nor speak more with that young reprobate."

"Father! Can your word make any one reprobate?"

"I ask God's pardon. I know not that he is yet reprobate. It may be that His mercy will yet call the lad. But until then you shall neither see him nor speak with him nor write to him. If he had every perfection under the blue heaven and was a Roman Catholic, he should not have you for his wife. No, by the Solemn League and the Holy Covenant, he should not!"

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,

though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, *and have not charity*, I am nothing.' They are not my words, father, and you need not be angry at me for them."

"You are quoting Scripture, as women always quote it, clean beside the mark. Go to your own room, Miss Balfour, and consider your words and your ways; for mind this: *Nothing, nothing, nothing* shall ever make me give a father's welcome to Donald Torquil! Do you think I am going to give the Torquils a chance to count the Balfour martyrs and confessors among their old papistical, paternostering ancestors? I am not that wicked, I hope."

"But, father—"

"Go your ways into solitude, and think shame of yourself, Miss Balfour. I have no other word to say to you at this hour."



CHAPTER V.

SARA'S LOVER.

"I have seen the desire of mine eyes,
The beginning of love,
The season of kisses and sighs,
And the end thereof."

* * * * *

"Mother most tender, help thy poor child,
Haste with thy succor, Maid undefiled!
Amiable Mother, stainless and fair,
Take a fair creature into thy care!"

"Now for a dance before the wind," said Donald, and he laid his hand upon the anchor chain, and, with a boy's help, brought it aboard, hand over hand. Then the *Sea Bird* went flying down the Minch, ducking and plunging to the short rollers. Her sails were wet with the spray showers, and the wind pressed her almost

like a solid wall—the keen life-laden wind of the wild North Sea—while Maclane and Donald experienced an exultation no one can understand who has not felt the glorious sense of freedom and power, that managing a boat with a brisk breeze and a high sea can give.

The two men were smoking, both sensible of the cheering, inspiring air about them, and yet both a little thoughtful and silent. Donald had noticed the return of Mr. Balfour, and his heart had experienced one of those sudden premonitions of coming evil, which the wisest are unable to reason away. He waited a little to see if Maclane would offer any explanation of the circumstance, but as he did not do so, Donald abruptly made the inquiry :

“Why did Mr. Balfour return home without bidding me good-bye?”

“We had been talking of you and your family, and I inadvertently alluded to its religion and politics.”

“Was he angry at my religion?”

“At your concealment of it he was angry.”

“I am afraid you have made me a great sorrow, Maclane.”

“There is always sorrow in deception, Donald. At the first, you ought to have made all clear. When you sit day after day on a man's hearthstone and win his daughter, he has a right to know exactly what and who you are. Why did you not tell him? The night that he saved you from the sea and asked you to his home was your fortunate hour. If then he had continued his courtesy, he could not have blamed you; if, on the contrary, he had made you understand then that your faith and family were insuperable objections to friendship, you, at that time, could have easily resigned yourself to a disappointment about Roberta Balfour.”

“No; I could not. In the very first hour of our meeting, it would have been impossible to resign her. I hoped to win both father and daughter so entirely that my family and faith—both accidents of birth for which I am not

responsible—would be accepted with me. How could I imagine they would be less tolerant than myself?"

"Then you know nothing of the Lowland Scots. They are all intense theologians. Matters of church discipline and government are articles of their salvation, and there is not one of them who would not go to the stake for his own particular views on the subject. This very Mr. Balfour gave up one of the richest churches in Scotland for a quibble in the ecclesiastical court affecting the spiritual authority of the kirk only; and, though a man of good family and profound scholarship, preferred an isolated parish among illiterate peasants, with his principles, to a wealthy, cultivated one, with some one's else principles."

"But what have theology and church government to do with my love for Roberta?"

"You will find that they have a great deal to do with it. You will have to give up Roberta Balfour, I am sure."

"Never. She may give me up. I shall never, never resign her."

"I cannot understand why a young man so candid as you are, did not at the first tell Mr. Balfour your real social standing. It was scarcely honorable. He has a right to feel hurt at you."

"No; you cannot understand a lover's fears and doubts and hesitations; his desire to let well alone; his dread of explanations; his preference for a delicious uncertainty, not devoid of hope, to a positive position, which might be one of despair. Nor can you understand, perhaps, that I might wish to woo and win Roberta as a simple gentleman. Women are very much influenced by position and by title; I wanted Roberta to accept Donald Torquil; when she had done so, I intended to tell her what social advantages I could give her with my name."

"You reasoned like a romantic, inexperienced young man."

"It takes a lover to understand a lover," said Donald, and he spoke with some irritation.

Maclane looked at him kindly, and for a moment there was a shadow of uncertainty in his manner; then he said:

"Come into the cabin, Donald; I want to tell you something; and the swash of the sea, and the wind blowing the waves, make talking difficult. Now we are more comfortable. You say it takes a lover to understand a lover—well, then, I am far more deeply in love than you are. A boy of twenty-two can only love like a boy of twenty-two; a man of forty loves with a strength and passion that only a matured soul can nourish."

"I might have known it. Who could see Roberta and not—"

"It is not Roberta; be easy, quite easy, on that ground. I shall never be your rival. It is Miss Torquil that I love. All other women seem to me plain and colorless beside her."

"Sara?"

“Yes, she is the one woman I have ever desired. When you have exhausted words in describing Roberta Balfour, I would not have found a sentence worthy of your sister. In my case, also, it was a love born perfect. The first moment I saw Miss Torquil, I was as much enthralled as I am at this hour; because I loved her then with every capacity of my nature. Now, I did at once what you ought to have done. I asked on the second day of my visit for an interview with Sir Rolfe. I said to him: ‘Sir, I love Miss Torquil. I can never love her more or love her less than I do now. I desire to marry her. I can give her such and such advantages. I will settle upon her absolutely such and such money and property.’”

“And what did my father say?”

“He answered: ‘Mr. Maclane, I am obliged by your confidence. I shall be glad to give you my daughter if she is willing to be your wife.’ I asked then that he would respect my con-

fession. I had your sister to woo, but the way to her favor was so far clear."

"And I hope, with all my heart, that you will win Sara."

"I am not easily discouraged, Donald. There are nicks in time which a man has only to be on the watch for, and success is in them. I am not fanciful and unreasonable. I do not expect Miss Torquil to love me after a Byronic or Tom Moore-ish fashion. If I can gain her respect and friendship, I shall feel that I have a noble foundation laid, and I can trust her for her love. A good woman is a generous and a grateful woman; she will give love for love, if only she be sure of her husband's pure and perfect devotion to her. That is my theory. I can trust it."

Involuntarily the young man put out his hand, and the elder's closed upon it. Maclane's face was calm and happy; Donald's eyes were shining through tears; the youth had not yet learned to control his emotions, but his com-

panion trusted and respected them. He understood that this excess of feeling in youth made a tolerant middle-age and a mellow old one.

"What would you advise me to do, Maclane?"

"See Mr. Balfour as soon as you can. You may not succeed in persuading or even in pacifying him, but it is right for you to try. Frankly, I do not think you will succeed."

"Then, what?"

"Can you give up the girl?"

"If I give up life—not unless."

"There is no such question, Donald. Life is not yours to give up. Let us avoid hyperboles. Does Roberta love you?"

"Yes—as I love her."

"Then you cannot give her up. You must wait. Everything comes to those who can wait."

"Would you tell Sir Rolfe?"

"There seems to be no necessity to trouble him with an affair so very uncertain. It should

be your object to get closer to your father, not to put another disagreement between you ; and he would certainly regard a marriage between you and Roberta Balfour as a very great trial."

This conversation, varied and extended in all its points, filled with unceasing interest the hours of their sail home. Near Erbusaig they were delayed by mist and squalls coming up through Raasay Sound, and the *Sea Bird* had to stagger along under double reef until Torquil Harbor was across her bow. Then a long tack had to be made, so that it was the middle of the morning when they cast anchor.

"It is my last sail for some months," said Maclane. "To-morrow I must go back to business. But I have had a memorable holiday, Donald, though quite a different one from what I anticipated."

"You have taken the ocean instead of the hills as a restorer."

"You must remember I am an inland man,

and when I needed recreation, the mountains were the most natural suggestions. But as soon as I saw the sea I knew what I wanted. I must buy a boat of my own, Donald, then we can have some fine racing. I will write to some good builder about one as soon as I get home."

"Better by far have it built in Ross. They know the kind of boat for these seas. The *Sea Bird* will keep right side up when a fine fancy yacht will be running wild and going bottom up over her crew. Have a Ross boat for Ross seas; in a storm she'll edge away to windward under a bit of canvas, and bring you safe into harbor. Angus Mackenzie and his father built the *Sea Bird*, and we launched her to a flowing tide, with her prow foremost. It was Sara who sent her off in the old Gael fashion. She would send yours off, too, I am sure, and then she would take luck with her."

Maclane smiled. "I should like to see her do it; I would believe in that luck."

"I ~~never~~ saw Sara so beautiful as she was on

that morning when we launched the *Sea Bird*. There was a good breeze of wind, and it fluttered her dress and scarf, and she looked so tall and splendid, that I could not help thinking of those old Norse sea-queens that we read so much about in the sagas—especially when she stood far out at the bow, and chanted the launch charm :

“ ‘ *From rocks and sands,
And barren lands,
And ill men's hands,
Keep free.
Well in, well out,
With a good shout !* ”

“And then the wine was spilt and the men cried, ‘Off!’ and off she went, dancing and courtesying like a lady.”

“Very pleasant ; we will have another launch, and Miss Torquil, I hope, will be sea-priestess again, Donald?”

“I hope so.” The words were said upon the door-step, as Fergus set it wide open for their entrance. He looked at both Maclane and

Donald with disapprobation. He understood that Maclane had come to Torquil to shoot; he regarded shooting as the recreation for gentlemen. "Strafaging about the Minch in a small poat wass not respectable whateffer;" and he felt hurt at Donald lowering the tone of their visitors by decoying any one from the hills to the salt-water.

"Sir Rolfe hass peen seeking you, Maistir Tonalf, and he wass saying, he will pe to seek you, anywhere at all, between Torquil and Stornoway. Ou, ay, people that will be knowing, Maistir Tonalt, say, it iss always the same port the *Sea Bird* goes for; they are saying that whateffer. North, ay, north; I'm seeing that fine mysel'."

"I hope you have not said so to Sir Rolfe, Fergus. You promised never to look which way I went."

"A man iss not carin' to shut his eyes too often, Maistir Tonalt, and Father Contach himself asking me the way. It's no for the like of

me to be telling a real goot man like Father Contach what iss not the truth. He wass at the castle last night, and he wass shaking hands with me, and he wass saying: 'So Maistir Tonalt is on the sea again, and which way iss it he will be taking whateffer, Fergus?'"

"And you told him?"

"I did not tell him, but I will haf to tell him of the lie whateffer at my next confession, and it iss many a time I haf gone round my beads for you already, Maistir Tonalt."

"Don't be cross, Fergus. What did the Father say? Or rather, what did you say to him?"

"I saidt: 'You will haf to ask himself, Father. They were telling me he wass going north, and they were telling me he wass going south, and some, mirover, were saying it wass to Rona whateffer the *Sea Bird* flew—but I was not knowing myself.' That is what I saidt, and the father looket sharp at me, and he saidt: 'That iss no way to speak, Fergus. If you will pe saying your prayers to-night—and surely you will

pe saying [them—maybe, to-morrow, you will pe knowing if it pe to the north or south or west the *Sea Bird* goes. And so, maybe, if you will pe saying your own prayers, Maistir Tonalt, you will not pe wanting an old man, who hass ferry little time left for praying, to pe telling the lie for you.”

At that hour, life seemed a very dull, hopeless affair to Donald. Mr. Balfour's anger, Father Matthew's suspicions, and the ill-temper of Fergus, being all knots in the same tangled skein of circumstances. He did not even feel as if Mac-lane's sympathy had been all he might have expected from him, and he began to change his clothing with an utter weariness of the conditions of his life. For youth is the time when these pallid despairs have their greatest power. Men in mid life know that there are few troubles that are really as bad as they appear to be ; and old men feel that their journey is nearly over, and that no contradiction of sorrow can hurt them very long. So, it is youth that dashes its

head against the insurmountable wall of circumstances; when years bring wisdom, the same man will recognize that the wall is the absolute, and he will make a friend of it and walk under its shelter.

The twenty years' difference in the ages of Maclane and Donald put between them just this difference in their way of looking at life. Maclane was as far sympathetic as it was possible for him to be. He remembered, also, his own youthful extravagances of emotion, and watched Donald under the same excesses with a sentiment in which disapproval and envy were curiously mixed. Loving, perhaps, quite as passionately as Donald, he was still able to restrain impetuosities which might injure his pretensions, and to affect that wise and calm devotion which was more suitable to his years.

Yet never a lover's heart beat more warmly and tenderly than his when he perceived that fortune had given him the opportunity he had been watching for. He had made his usual

most fastidious toilet and enjoyed the late breakfast which Fergus had served him, and then, having lit his cigar, was about to take a walk in the court, when Miss Torquil, glowing with health and beauty, returned from her ride.

“I have left Lord Lenox on the moor,” she said, gayly. “A wing of plover, followed by a pack of grouse, were too much for him—or rather, too much for me, for he left me to pursue them.”

“How could he be so insensible?”

“He expected to be insensible. He took his gun with him—at least he sent a gilly with it to the Black Cairn. When the two men met, I had not a chance, I assure you. You should have seen their faces; I feel sure that Lord Lenox was very glad to leave me to the care of my groom.”

Maclane lifted her from the saddle, followed her into the breakfast-parlor, and procured her a cup of coffee. She sat down before the fire to drink it; and, very soon, they fell into an

easy conversation about Donald and their recent sail, and Mr. Maclane's near departure. At first it was animated and continuous, but gradually Maclane's intense feeling became only half-veiled, his questions were absently asked, his answers as absently made. Little intervals of silence fell between them. Sara began to be aware of an atmosphere strange and full of fate ; she was anxious to escape from it, and struggling against her sensibility to it, when Maclane spoke :

“ Miss Torquil, I am going away, as you know, to-morrow, but I shall leave all the sweetest and strongest hopes of my life with you. I am sure that you understand this ; love, such as mine, must have been divined by its object.”

“ I have seen that you think very highly of me. To deny it would be affectation.”

“ I love you. I can say no stronger words, if you believe them. I know that I am twenty years older than you are ; but, sincerely, I do not think mere youth is the advantage people affect

to consider it in a lover. Your great beauty and honorable descent deserve a high social position. I can give it to you. No one shall have a more splendid home and retinue in London; and there are few country houses in all England to compare with Sarum Court, my residence in Lancashire. I will settle ten thousand pounds upon you, to be entirely in your own will and pleasure. I will be a true, honorable and devoted husband to you. If my pleading seems mercenary, remember I must say all that I can for my own cause. I have not youth nor beauty to offer; love, wealth, honor, high social position, I can give. Will you think over what I have said, Miss Torquil?"





CHAPTER VI.

SENTENCE SUSPENDED.

Sara had listened with glowing cheeks and little nervous movements of her hands, occasionally lifting her eyes to the earnest face regarding her with such tender entreaty. The honesty and warmth of her lover's appeal were beyond doubt; and she was far from being insensible to the social advantages Mr. Maclane could give her. Even while he was speaking, she had imagined herself at the head of a splendid London establishment, and a leader in that world of fashion and gayety which environs royalty and political power. She knew, only too well, the miseries of proud poverty, and the compelled acts of shabbiness and meanness that are the results of a want of ready money.

Donald could have his troop; her father could make Tasmer all that he dreamed of making it. The restoration of the old church; the new rectory for Father Contach; oh, so many good things were included in the offer she was listening to!

And Maclane was pleasant-looking, a gentleman; clever; with a 'good heart and a generous hand. It was not as if money was all he had to give her. She looked up once, almost with acceptance in her eyes; but ere the feeling was distinct enough to reveal itself, she remembered the dark, handsome face of Lord Lenox. Not two hours previously, he had said to her: "Do you know why I asked you to ride with me to the Black Cairn? Because I wish to leave my image in every one of your usual haunts. I want you to think of me wherever you are"—and the words had been invested with a far tenderer meaning by the way in which he had leaned forward to catch her eyes, by the glow in his own eyes, and by the caressing manner in which he had touched her hand.

Indeed, during his whole visit, Lord Lenox had been hinting in a variety of ways the devotion which Maclane had expressed so plainly. Lenox was young, noble, fascinating; she supposed he was wooing her as gentlemen of his order were accustomed to woo; and that Mr. Maclane's undisguised statements were equally the natural method of a man accustomed to business, and methodical, straightforward arrangements.

So, when he ceased speaking, Sara Torquil met his eyes with a frank yet grave assent to the request he made :

"I will certainly think of what you have said, Mr. Maclane," she answered. "I do not love you; I have never thought of marrying you : so much I ought to tell you."

"But you do not dislike me?"

"That would be impossible."

"And you respect my character as far as you know and understand it?"

"I should do you a great injustice if I did not."

"Then I will dare to hope. I am seeking so great a favor that I expect to seek it with patient diligence, and to wait until time brings me the propitious hour."

"But I have not promised that time will ever bring it. Remember that, Mr. Maclane."

"As long as you remain Miss Torquil, I shall dare to hope for and to look for it."

She had risen and gathered her habit over her arm, and as he said the words, he was walking with her to the door of the room. As he opened it, Donald entered.

"Oh, Sara!" he cried, hurriedly, "I was looking for you. They told me you were riding with Lenox, and I was scolding you in my heart."

"But why, Donald?"

"Because, whenever I want you you are riding with Lenox."

"Then, why do you not stay at home and ride with me? Off to sea you go; you play truant from all hospitable duties; and not only are you

recreant yourself, you make Mr. Maclane quite as bad. I only am left to entertain Lenox; for father has given himself as a bond-slave to Simon Lovat, I think. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing particularly. I wanted to look at you. Do you think I should go to Sir Rolfe's room?—and, oh! Has he said anything about the *Sea Bird*?—I mean about the usual course she sails?"

"You are as bad as a woman, Donald. You put your principal question as a post-query. Now you do not want to see me particularly, nor yet, father; but you do want most particularly to know if he suspects you of any love-affair somewhere in the neighborhood of the Gairloch. I do! I do not believe father does. At present, he cannot understand how a man can care for anything but sheep and birds and red deer."

"Then I had better see him at once?"

"I think you had."

"What are you going to do, Maclane?"

"I thought of walking down to the village and talking with the Mackenzies about a boat."

"I am glad of that. If you see Angus, tell him to come up to the castle—tell him to leave the fishing and every other thing, and come without fail."

To Donald's knock, Sir Rolfe, in the half-conscious way of a thoroughly engrossed man, gave the word to enter. He was sitting at a table loaded with papers—old parchment deeds, and modern legal cap covered with figures or with one kind of angular, aggressive-looking writing. Simon Lovat sat by his side; their heads were together over a large map of the estate; Torquil's fine soldierly figure contrasting in the most marked manner with the keen, puckered, fox-like face of Lovat, his lean, small form and absorbed manner.

"Good-morning, Donald;" and Sir Rolfe lifted from the map his long, finely-shaped white hand, and offered it to his son in an absent manner. "You have been at sea again?"

"I took Mr. Maclane, sir. Maclane likes the sea; he has just gone to order a boat for himself. As for Lord Lenox, he has the whole moor to range, and he does not seem to care for any other pleasure."

"Well, well, make the most of your holiday. It will end in a few days. Then you and I have our work laid out for some years; have we not, Lovat?"

"A great work, a very great work, Mr. Donald."

"Much greater and better, Donald, than idling about barracks and dawdling after royal parades. I know the full value of that life, I am sorry to say."

"In all you desire I shall be glad to help you, sir."

"By the bye, what direction were you and Maclane sailing?"

"Northward, sir, toward Torridon."

"Did you see anything of the fishers around Melvich? They have been molesting the Tor-

quail fishers—fighting them on our own waters. Have you heard *who* this Melvich is?"

"No, sir. He is a stranger; he bought the *Assynt* out. That is all I know of him."

"Keep your eyes open when you sail north again. If there is more quarreling, I want you to witness it. The Torquils have fished the Ross coast for a thousand years. We will say 'by your leave' to no one; more in particular to a man like this Melvich, whom nobody knows. Excuse me now, Donald. I must make the most of Mr. Lovat's time. He is obliged to leave Tasmer to-morrow."

Thus dismissed, Donald found himself quite at leisure, and he gladly employed the next few hours in thinking of Roberta and in writing to her. Although unaware of the extent of Mr. Balfour's anger, he understood from his abrupt relinquishment of ordinary courtesy that it was extreme. He was anxious to justify himself to Roberta and to explain to her anew the probability of a sudden temporary cessation of his

visits. The winter storms were imminent; any day, the blustering winds and roaring seas of that rock-bound coast might be an insurmountable barrier between them.

It is always hard to defend one's self against charges not definite, but only suspected. For his want of candor regarding his true position and his religion, Donald was compelled to blame himself, and thus in a manner excuse Mr. Baltour. After two hours' writing, he was very much dissatisfied with the presentation he had made of his own case; indeed, he felt that the best thing he could do was to throw himself upon Roberta's love and forgiveness. But although his letter was far from pleasing him, he gave it to Angus with many verbal additions and directions, in case he should be so fortunate as to see Roberta.

They had gone into the firs to talk over the matter, for it was only at this hour Donald made Angus a confidant. Certainly he had understood why the *Sea Bird* always set her sail

for Ellerloch, and both he and the two boys had frequently seen Roberta Balfour; but their devotion and respect were so entire that Donald had fully trusted to them. Until he chose to speak, he knew they would all be blind and deaf and dumb; explanation was now, however, imperative, and Donald made it freely, taking his humble friend completely into his hopes and fears.

"And you will be one with me, I know, Angus," he concluded; "for she is a noble girl, and she loves me, and you have seen, also, how beautiful she is."

"I haf seen her, and I haf not seen her, Maistir Tonalt," Angus answered, with modest courtesy; "'twas not for the like of me to be lifting my eyes whateffer to the laaty yourself waas thinking apout. She iss a ferry fine laaty, and I waas hearing, mirover, that she can manage a poat as well as she can manage her father's house. Yes, I haf heardt that. It iss a great

thing for a young laaty to manage a poat. Inteet it is, praise God !”

“ You must try and give this letter into her own hand, Angus—even if you wait a little to do so. And you will mind every word she says—and every word the minister says—”

“ I will care nothing, I will care nothing at all for what the minister will be saying. He iss not of the Ross men. He iss a stranger, and he iss a Protestant mirover, and he is a ferry stern man with his sermons and his reproofs, where there is no needt whateffer. They’re saying that ; yes, they are saying that of the minister ; and he iss a Protestant mirover.”

“ His daughter is a Protestant also, Angus. There may be good Protestants, you know.”

“ Ou, ay ; it iss not the young laaty’s fault—no inteet ! It waas her father wouldt be teaching her from the cradle ; and they are saying her father is a great scholar, and so he wouldt be knowing what iss the right way, if he wouldt be walking in it. ’Tis his fault ; you will pe saying

yourself 'tis his fault, sir. And when you are marrit on Miss Balfour, it iss a goot Catholic Father Contach will be makin' of the laaty, praise God; for it is an awful thing for people to be marrit together when they are not both goot Catholics; and iss it not, sir?"

"I do not know, Angus," and Donald looked very blankly in his counselor's face.

During this conversation they had passed to the outskirts of the firs, and were standing together facing the sea.

"It is very rough, Angus. I do not think you can manage a boat on such a sea," said Donald.

"The windt is fair, and I will not be carin' for the sea."

"You will try and give the letter into Miss Balfour's own hands?"

"Yes, I will give it into her own hands; and I will see aal and I will hear aal, and I will say nothing to anger the minister; and the tefil himself cannot be finding fault with a dumb man. I will be going; even now I will be going."

"I shall be miserable until you get back, Angus."

"There is no needt, there is no needt what-effer. If you will pe lookin' for goot, then goot will pe comin' to you. Yes, inteet, praise God!"





CHAPTER VII.

A LOVE-LETTER.

“Love’s reason’s without reason.”

“Let determined things to destiny
Hold unbewail’d their way.”

“A woman’s thought runs before her actions.”

“Spirits are not finely
Touched but to fine issues.”

All at once, the usually delayed winter settled down upon the desolate land and sea. Scarcely a week had passed since Donald sent Angus to Ellerloch, and Tasmer had almost the air of some enchanted castle, so lonely and silent—so shut off from the world of thought and action was it. Mr. Maclane and Lord Lenox, with

their servants, and also the additional servants their presence made necessary at Tasmer, were all gone. The halls were silent, and many of the rooms closed, for Sir Rolfe had resolutely cut down the regular expenses to the barest demands of anything like a comfortable life.

To Sara he had excused his economy on the ground of her own anticipated visit to her aunt, Lady Moidart.

"The expenses of a short season in London will be very great," he said ; "for if you go with Lady Moidart you must have everything requisite for your position. I desire you to be independent of all favors from the Moidart family, whom I always disliked."

"Lady Moidart is my mother's sister, father."

"True ; and equally true, that she was never tired of reproaching your mother for marrying a poor soldier with a shadowy baronetcy. But you must see London life, and she is the natural and proper person to introduce you to it."

If economy were necessary for this purpose,

Sara was willing to be economical. She had the natural desire of a young and beautiful woman, for society, and she wished to see if society were indeed the fascinating thing she had imagined it, from such remarks as had fallen from their late visitors. Also, she was anxious to see Lord Lenox again. Although he had made her no distinct profession of love, he had told her in a way no woman ever misinterprets, that she was beautiful in his eyes, and dear to his heart. She could not forget, especially, how tenderly he had held her hand at parting, and how his dark eyes had sought in her eyes some answering sign of her affection. At that time there had been no word spoken regarding her visit with Lady Moidart to London—the invitation having arrived after his departure—and she pleased herself with a thousand fancies of their meeting in society, and of Lenox's proud and happy surprise.

She was even glad that he did not know she was so soon to make a part of his own

world. She thought, with smiles, of meeting him suddenly in some triumph of the ball-room; or when riding in the Row; or in her box at the opera. She arranged the meeting to suit her own desires, in every possible way, and under every conceivable circumstance, and she was happier in such dreaming than in any of the actual events of life around her.

It is true, none of them were very exciting. The household had been reduced to a couple of women in the kitchen, a chambermaid and a laundress; Fergus, as usual, acting as steward and attending to the table. Tasmer was environed by great white moors and a black tossing ocean. Visiting was impossible, and to keep warm and pass the time as comfortably as might be, seemed the only visible object of life. Donald was moody and restless and inclined to solitude. He told Sara he was anxious about his future, which was a true enough statement, though Sara thought of it in one way, and Donald in another. She imagined his anxiety

referred to the plans which Sir Rolfe was perfecting in the seclusion of his own room, and which Donald was expected to assist in carrying out. Donald knew that his main care referred to the success of the mission on which he had sent Angus Mackenzie.

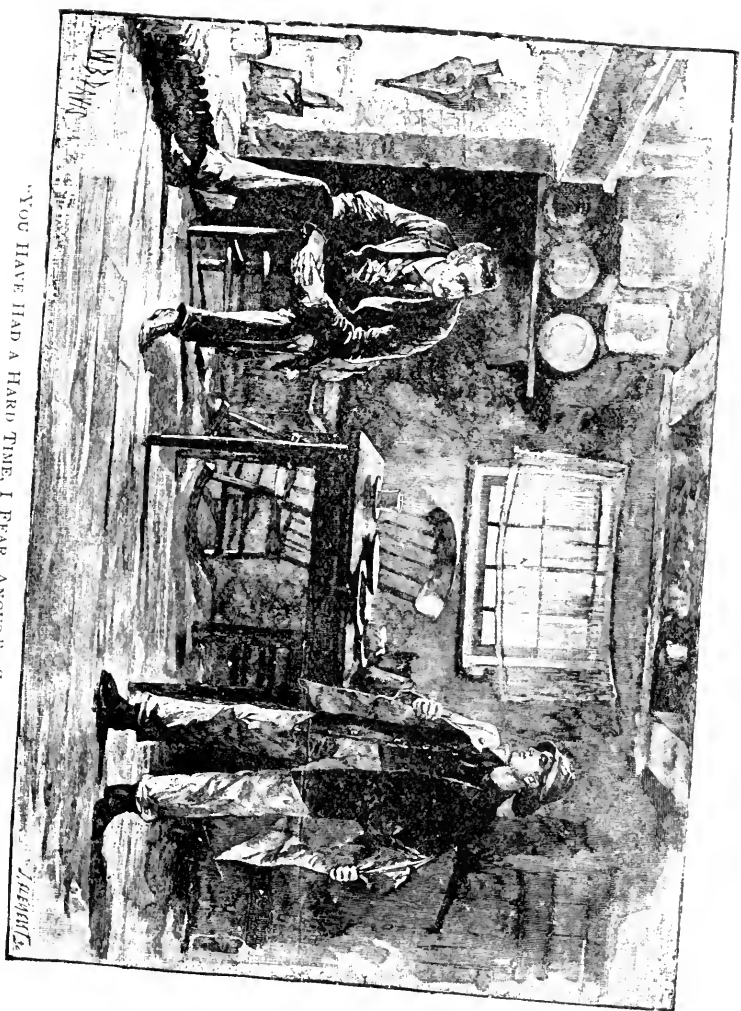
Angus had been nearly a week away, and every day had been a separate week to Donald. He was angry at the wind and the waves and the black sky; he felt as if nature herself were hostile to him. Sometimes he was angry at Angus, and the unreason of his anger made it no easier to control. On the afternoon of the sixth day, however, he saw the returning boat, and he went down to the village to meet it. It was hard for the sturdy little craft to make the harbor, for the wind was about southeast, and a good blow of it. But Angus kept her broad, square stern at right angles to the traveling wave, and fighting his way slowly, lunged forward into smooth water. But it was a nasty day; a waste of gray below, and a waste of

gray above, and a thick smurr of rain between. "A little shoory," as Angus said, throwing off his oil-skins, and turning his kind, handsome face to Donald, who was sitting on Helen Mackenzie's hearth-stone. She was hurrying forward a cup of tea and a bannock and herring for her hungry, wet son; but she understood that there were "*whisht words*" between the young men, and as soon as the meal was ready, she took her knitting and went into a neighbor's cottage.

Then Donald said: "You have had a hard time, I fear, Angus."

"I haf had a hard time, sir. The windt wass never steady; it wass sweeping the sea in heavy squalls, with but ferry little rest between them; the poat herself wass glat when we got under the landt. There was a man wrapped up in oil-skins on the pier, and he said to me: 'You was hafing a hardt fight whateffer, and I was waiting here to see if you would be wanting help; and where will you be coming from in such

"YOU HAVE HAD A HARD TIME, I FEAR, ANGUS."—See Page 130.





weather?" he says, ferry kindly. Then I saw it wass the minister, and he wass knowing me also, and when he was speaking again it wass not so kindt. 'And what are you coming here for, Angus Mackenzie?' he asked me. I saidt: 'There is no shame in my coming here whateffer, Maistir Balfour. I haf brought a letter from the young Laird of Torquil to your daughter, sir.' 'And iss that it?' he asked. 'Then come with me. And were you seeing anything of Mr Maclane since a few days?' Ferry sifil he wass, and I said I wass not seeing nothing apout him for a week, nor more than that; and I wass hearing he hadt gone back to the south whateffer; and he saidt no more till we were in the house, and it was in my oil-skins he took me into the parlor."

"Then you saw Miss Balfour?"

"She was sitting in the parlor, and she wass sewing her white seam, mirover, and when the minister saidt: 'Here is Angus Mackenzie with a letter from young Torquil,' she lifted her head

as quick as a flash of lightning. And I took the letter from my pocket, and wass going to gif it to her, but the minister, he stept forward more quick than I can tell you, and he took the letter from me and he put it in the blazing fire; and he stoodt before the fire and he lookedt at Miss Balfour with his lips tight shut and his face as white as a mortal corpse."

"Oh, Angus! Angus!"

"And it wass not my fault; no, it wass not my fault."

"What did Miss Balfour say?"

"She let her work fall down, and she stoodt up with her face blazing, and she wass in a tremple all ofer; and it wass almost in a whisper she saidt: 'Father! How cruel, how wicket that iss!' Ferry angry he spoke up: 'It iss kindt, it iss goot, it iss right, what I haf done, and I haf done it pefore your eyes. I might have got the letter from the man, and nefer told you that a letter came; but I will be honest with you, and I will show you and him, too, that I will not hat

you—no, nor myself—readt any letter that Tonalt Torquil writes. Now, Angus Mackenzie, you go to the kitchen and they will gif you meat and trink.’”

“And did Miss Balfour manage to see you in the kitchen?”

“It wass not in his house, sir, I wass going to stay, after the insult; and ferry quick I wass telling him that. ‘I will not set in your house whateffer sir, nor take a trink of coldt water in it. No, inteet! for I am the Torquil’s poor cousin, and his insult iss my insult; and it iss your white hairs and your plack coat will be safin’ you this morning.’ And what else couldt I pe saying? There was nothing else. You will be knowing that fine yourself, sir.”

“Oh, Angus, I wanted a word from her! I wanted a word so much!”

“Wass you thinking, sir, I wouldt be coming with no word in my mouth or in my hand? No, inteet! Praise God, Angus Mackenzie can make a new way, if the olt way will not pe a goot

way ;” and with a beaming face he took from his pocket the desired letter.

Donald was too happy to speak. The white message in his open hand thrilled him with delight. He anticipated the happy hour when he should be able to read it, and there was even a kind of luxury in postponing the joy until solitude could give it the last and sweetest charm. And for the present he held it fast in his hand and saw his own name in the free, clear writing he knew so well. It was in pencil, however, and as he looked at it he perceived that it was unsealed. Angus saw the flitting shadow of surprise on Donald’s face, and he answered it :

“She wass saying some ferry pretty wordts about the seal: ‘Tell Angus Mackenzie I haf no wax, but it will pe sealed safe with his honor.’ And you will be knowing, sir, that them are the true wordts whateffer?”

“True as truth, Angus. Wax might be broken; your honor is beyond doubt. But how did you get the letter?”

“A man is not carin’ to be treated thon way. I wass mat at the minister, and I thought, as I left his house at my pack, there will pe a Mackenzie somewhere in the village; for, praise God, the Mackenzies are all ofer Ross whateffer; and the ferry first cottage I came to wass Rose Mackenzie’s; and she was glat to see me. What for no, when I came from Torquil, and she wass porn and pred in the place whateffer? And I wass welcome on her hearth, and she gave me pread and a cup of tea, and I toldt her how the young Torquil hadt been insulted py the strange man from the south, and she wass mat, too, and she saidt: ‘I will pe taking the stockings I haf been knitting, to the minister, and I will pe seeing Miss Balfour, and if you haf a wordt to send her, it will pe going safe and secret in my mouth.’ So I toldt her to tell the young laaty that ‘my poat wouldt leafe that day, and yet it wouldt not leafe that day. I was going down the coast for eight miles to Locherrol, and there I wouldt leafe the boat and walk pack to Rose Mac-

kenzie's for the letter, if she wouldt pe hafing one for me to carry to the Torquil.' That wass the way I got the letter. It wass by Rose she sent it, also the pretty wordts apout my honor; and I will nefer pe forgetting them, nefer."

"What do you think of Mr. Balfour, Angus? If I go and see him, will he listen to me?"

"They are saying he is a shentleman, and so he will listen to you, if you will pe speaking to him; put he will not pe doing anything you will pe asking him. Oh, 'tis sure as the tide flowing! He will not pe doing anything at all. And he will not pe trusting his daughter, for it wass neither pen nor ink she couldt findt in the house, and the wax was in his own pocket; but, praise God, he had not mindt of the laaty's drawing-pencils, and the pencils and the honor of Angus Mackenzie wass enough. They are saying that he iss a ferry goot man, and a ferry powerful preacher, whateffer, and he has written some goot pooks; but he will standt between

you and his daughter till the day nefer—come—nefer—that iss what I am thinking.”

Donald would have gladly prolonged the conversation; he was ready to ask over and over how Roberta looked, what she wore, and what she was doing. As to the few words she spoke, he made Angus repeat them many times. But Angus was very tired. He had had but little sleep for a week, and the comfort of the fire and the sense of being at last off watch, was too much for the exhausted youth. He was soon fast asleep, and Donald, with the precious letter in his possession, not unwillingly left him to his much needed rest.

In some respects, Roberta's letter was everything a lover could desire, in others, it troubled him greatly; for she did not fear to face circumstances which he had persistently put away from his consciousness. Frankly confessing her love, solemnly declaring that she would marry no man but him, she yet pointed out how unlikely any marriage between them was.

"My father is not more determined to separate us than your father will be, so soon as he knows of our affection. Dearest Donald, love cannot be good if it makes sorrow and sin; for love is meant in some way to make us better, not worse. Oh, yes, it is meant to make us better, even if it be by the sad discipline of self-denial. My duty to my father is an old and a dear duty. He has been father and mother both to me, and I love him as he loves me. When he seems to be unkind or despotic, I know that he punishes himself more than he punishes me. This is a matter of conscience with him, and I am sure that he will never change. To spare my life, or his own life, he will not take back one word of his decision. I feel sure Sir Rolfe Torquil will be equally stubborn. What hope for us remains then? If you abandoned your faith, I should despise you. I should say, if Donald is recreant to his religion, how can I trust his affection? It is quite certain that I shall stand firm in the faith which I have been baptized in. One day, perhaps, you may be your own master, and I be left without any one to control my actions; but dare we think of such a possibility? We should be wicked indeed, if we did not tremble to enter the gates which death set wide for love."

Much more in the same tenor Roberta wrote; mingling the bitter words with sweet ones, and yet firmly refusing to encourage hopes which could lead to nothing but misery. "Such love is mockery," said Donald; "why should we be

permitted to meet, only that we may love and suffer? It is an irony of fate." And then, with strange, sweet, sorrowful power, Roberta's words stole through his memory, and frightened him: "Love is meant to make us better, even if it be by the sad discipline of self-denial."

As he was musing on this subject, a servant brought a message from his sister. They were to dine alone, she said, and she had ordered the meal to be served in her own parlor; and would Mr. Donald please not to keep the fish waiting?

Sara was in unusual spirits. Two or three things had happened which pleased her; and she was desirous to talk about them. Donald was generally her confidant; she was almost glad when Sir Rolfe decided to eat his dinner in his own room. There was something delightful in discussing pleasant events over a nice dinner, and she reflected that Donald was always appreciative of fine fish and perfectly cooked grouse, and delicate dessert. Few men are not so, even under depressing love-affairs, and the young

man's face brightened at the sight of the cheerily lit room, the elegant table and the beautiful girl who welcomed him.

The pleasant meal over, Donald and Sara turned their chairs to the fireside.

"I have had two very agreeable things happen to me this afternoon, Donald ; father gave me the key of mother's laces—grandmother's will go to your wife, he says—these are some of them ;" and she lifted some flounces from a work-basket at her side. "I was darning them a little ; are they not lovely ?"

"They look very yellow."

"Barbarian ! That is part of their loveliness. Look at this pattern. It is the crown and lilies, and was lost at the French Revolution. I assure you it is priceless. I am to have her jewelry, also, when I go to London. I wonder if it is handsome?"

For a moment, Donald's thoughts went back to the mother he could just remember. He had one or two sacred memories of her which he

never named, but jewels did not make any part of them.

“I never saw mother in jewels,” he said. “She seemed always to wear a white dress, and to be lying on a sofa. Poor mother! She was so young to die, I think father must have missed her very much. Why has he not come downstairs to dinner?”

“He is not very well; but he was good to me about my London visit this morning. I am to have five hundred pounds, and more if I require it. I understand, though, Donald, that he intends this to be my first and last season. I am to have my chance, dear, and I am expected to make the most of it—to marry, and to marry well, Donald.”

“When are you going?”

“I had a letter from Aunt Moidart this morning. She thinks I had better come to her as soon as possible. In another month, the roads will be blocked with snow or else be roaring torrents.”

“Not quite as bad as that. I shall miss you, Sara.”

“I hope you will, dear. However, father intends to keep you very busy. There has been a large correspondence opened, and you are to attend to it. I heard Lovat and father saying that.”

“Is Lovat coming back soon?”

“No ; he has Lord Lenox’s affairs to attend to now.”

“Why does he trouble himself about so many sick estates? I should be afraid of the man. No doubt he has his own interests to attend to, also.”

“I think you are mistaken. Simon Lovat is a character. He takes his proper fee, of course ; but he really finds the keenest pleasure in turning poor estates into rich ones. He loves money because it is money. He loves to see it increase. He expects a piece of land as big as my pocket-handkerchief to do its duty and add to the rent-roll. Father says Lovat cannot hear

a large sum of money mentioned without having a palpitation of his heart. When he counts gold or notes, his face flushes like a girl's. I suppose he has the same pleasure in bringing riches out of poverty as a doctor has in a desperate case, or a soldier in a forlorn hope."

"It is the love of chase in us, Sara. All men have the passion in some form or other. Even in our high civilization we are constantly exhibiting the stealthy or cruel instincts of ancestors, who were, both as regards men and animals, 'mighty hunters before the Lord'—or the devil."

"We are wandering from our subject, which was London. I suppose this season may decide my fate, Donald."

"Don't be in a hurry, Sara. Girls are so apt to take their first offer, and it is very often a bad one."

"Do you think so? I have had my first offer, Donald—and refused it. at least, I suppose it was a refusal."

"Oh! It was Lenox, I dare say. I am glad you refused him. I always thought him mean enough, and he is simply devoted to himself."

"You are mistaken—every way. It was Mr. Maclane who honored me."

"Indeed, then, it was an honor. Surely you did not refuse him?" And Donald, having mind of his friend's confidence in him, listened anxiously for her answer.

"I do not love him. What is love? Were you ever in love, Donald? Do poets and novelists tell the truth about it? If so, I am not in love with Mr. Maclane, and I told him so."

"Did that settle the matter?"

"No. He said he would be satisfied with my respect and friendship. He thought respect and friendship a safe foundation for marriage. Do you, Donald?"

"It might be—only, Sara, if—if, after marriage, you should meet the one you could love, you would feel as if you had turned the key on

your own happiness and you must stand outside of it forever. That would be dreadful."

At this moment Father Matthew Contach entered the room.

"My children," he said, "can I sit beside you for a little while?"

They made room for him joyfully ; but it was not many minutes ere Sara saw that he was troubled, and she said :

"Something has grieved you, dear Father?"

"There is trouble in the village, Sara. I came up to see Sir Rolfe about it ; came through the rain, hoping to spare some hearts an anxiety ; but Sir Rolfe will say nothing on the subject to me. He is not ready to speak yet, he says, and surely he is not bound to do so until he is fully persuaded in his own mind ; but when the heart is sad hours are so long. I thought to end suspense, that was all. Well, Sara, and so you are going to London?"

Then he put away all his depression and listened with interest and pleasure to all the

hopes of the gay, glad girl; now and then, as it seemed wise and kind, reminding her of the duties that must not be forgotten. Indeed, his interest in Lady Moidart's letters, in the season's promises, in the great people and great festivals of the world so far removed from him, appeared so keen and sympathetic, that Donald felt a kind of sorrow in the seclusion of a man so learned, so splendidly manly, and yet so Christ-like; and with the impulsiveness and want of tact common in youth he ventured a remark which implied this feeling.

Father Matthew neither resented nor denied the supposition. He looked thoughtful for a few moments, and then answered:

"I think, Donald, that all priests feel sometimes the weight of the cross which they have voluntarily lifted, and which they cheerfully bear in the main. Christ felt His cross heavy. As for myself, I never regret such moments of weariness; they are only momentary, and from them the soul triumphantly rises.

“ ‘ The cross is strength ; the solemn cross is gain.
The cross is Jesu's breast.
Here giveth He the rest
That to His best beloved doth still remain.’ ”





CHAPTER VIII.

FATHER AND SON.

"We sowed the seed and reap'd the grain, with thankful
hearts and kind ;
Our cattle grazed upon the hill that rose our homes behind ;
And so we dwelt in peace and rest for many a changing
year ;
Not rich, but riches never made a home so doubly dear.
The spirit of the olden times, that blazed so bright of
yore,
Had died away, and no one spoke of faith or honor more ;
And the race that for a thousand years had dwelt within the
glen,
Were rudely summoned from their homes, to beg as broken
men."

It was a day of extreme winter gloom and storm. In Tasmer there was nothing to be done except to submit to the tyranny of the elements, and to make the best of such sources of comfort

and amusement as were to be obtained within the castle. Sara was in London, and Sir Rolfe had been for two weeks the subject of singular mental indecision or conflict. He had rather avoided than sought his son's society; and Donald noticed that the work to which he had been so earnestly devoted was entirely neglected. The papers and estimates lay upon a table in his room, but he did not refer to them in any way when they were together.

Their companionship had not been very cheerful. The two men had no subjects of mutual, engrossing interest; and each was aware of a certain lack of confidence in the other. As far as Sir Rolfe was concerned, the lack was painful to him. He had looked forward with pleasure to the hour when he might make his son his coadjutor and friend. Their work had been laid out for these very two weeks in which he had felt compelled to stand still, and unable to solicit either the confidence or help of Donald.

Father Matthew was the man that troubled Torquil. On that wet night, when he had walked up to Tasmer through the storm to reason with him, he had said some words which had made Sir Rolfe very uncomfortable about his projects. Since then the worldly element and the religious element had been having a fierce struggle in his heart. He was not a man able to stand between two opinions, if the opinions were of any moment to him ; and he was sure that until he was quite persuaded in his own mind, he would never succeed in carrying out his wishes.

So the papers lay upon the table, and he walked up and down and argued with conscience. He was much also in the oratory ; his regular religious duties did not satisfy his spiritual scruples ; he had imposed special observances upon himself. But the truth was, he looked not for direction ; he did not want to know what to do. He had made up his mind what to do, and he was vainly trying to stumble

upon something which would justify his course to his own heart. And he had two weeks of uncertainty, and of specious reasoning, ere he came to the moment in which he said firmly, and without a shadow of regret :

“I will do it. A man’s first duty is to those of his own household.”

The decision was arrived at early in the morn. He had just risen from his prayers. He was in the clearest and calmest of mental moods. He was devoid of all irritations, physical and domestic. The resolution sprung up in a moment, matured, firm, certain. No pity, no doubt, troubled the new-born conclusion. He was surprised they ever should have done so. He wondered where such weakness had come from, and equally where it had gone to. Alas! It is not always the angel can strive. There comes a moment when a man is permitted to take his own way.

He walked to the table and put his hand upon the plan of the Tasmer estate. Never had he

opened it with such pride and affection. He spread it wide, and stood looking at it. Nothing else was required to confirm all his will. He was even conscious of a sudden and quite remarkable access of pride in his heritage, and of affection for the honors pertaining to so long a succession. The gloom of the day, the storm raging on the ocean below him, the wailing of the great winds through the firs, added a somber grandeur to the moment, and in some way made a sympathetic atmosphere of the stern realities of his thoughts.

After breakfast he sent for his son; and Donald knew as soon as he entered the room, that some decisive hour had arrived. Sir Rolfe was standing on the hearth, and he looked as he might have looked when he kept the Kyber Pass with a handful of men around him and only two words in his mouth—“*No surrender.*” He put out his fine white hand and clasped Donald’s hand, hard and brown with handling of oars and the tan of the salt sea wind.

“Good morning, Donald. I want to talk with you. I have come to a point in which I need your help. Let us sit down.”

His manner was affectionate, but tinged with an air of authority which Donald always found it difficult to resist. He walked to the table, took from it the Tasmer map and laid it open on a small stand between them. Donald was well acquainted with the history of the family, and Sir Rolfe touched no longer upon it than he judged necessary to rouse the younger man's pride and interest. But he spoke more fully and feelingly on the poverty of the house during the past four generations.

“If we had only been sensible and declared for the German house in A. D. 1745, we had been Earls of Ross,” he said, with some bitterness.

“They that were before us, father, did the duty of their day. You and I would have done the same.”

“I should never have gone with the Stuarts.”

“The Stuarts, however unworthily, represented the true faith. You would have ranged yourself on that side, I am sure, father.”

“Let the Stuarts pass. The family we have to consider is the Torquils. We are poor, and we ought to be rich. We have a rental of six thousand pounds, and we ought, in bare honesty to ourselves, to have a rental of twenty thousand pounds. The rental ought to increase every year. If we follow out Simon Lovat’s plans, we shall be rich in ten years. We may become a political power, and by a judicious selection of party and persons, recover our earldom. Then we will rebuild Eilan Donan and rule in Kintail as our fathers did.”

Donald was young and enthusiastic, and his bright, eager face answered the steady glow of enthusiasm which made Sir Rolfe potent enough to realize all his ambition.

“Examine this map, Donald. Glen Mohr can be rented to Maclane for two thousand pounds a year. Torquil woods for nearly an equal sum.

All the moors and hills back of them must be put under sheep. Tasmer braes will alone feed a flock of three thousand."

"The people of Easter-Torquil have always grazed their cattle on the braes. Will your plan interfere with them?"

"They will interfere with me; very seriously interfere with me; and I intend to resume my rights this year."

"Have they not, also, some rights in the braes?"

"None whatever. Each cotter rents from me his house, and five to ten acres of land; he rents year by year. Some foolish Torquil permitted them to graze their cattle and sheep on the braes, and they have gone on doing so, until they take as a right what was originally a favor. I want the braes for my own sheep now."

"I am afraid they will think your resumption of the land very unkind—in fact, a great wrong."

"I am prepared for that. At the first whisper of my intention, they took their grievance to

Father Contach. Greatly to my surprise, he stands with them; and he came up here one night—came through a rain-storm to make me very uncomfortable. Since then, I have fully considered the course I intend to pursue, and I have satisfied myself that I am doing quite right.”

“If they refuse to give up grazing their cattle on the braes?”

“I shall then refuse to rent them cottages and crofts. They acknowledge that the grazing claim is contingent upon the possession of the crofts and cottages which I rent them. Very well, then; I shall not rent them cottages—”

“But, father, they have lived in Eastern-Torquil as long as we have lived in Tasmer. They bear our name. They share our blood. Their ancestors stood by ours through many a century. But for their bravery, the Macdonalds had long ago driven us from our lands.”

“The Macdonalds have to mind the law now.”

“Ay; but the Macdonalds burned us out in

1539. It was under Donald Gorm. Then the bravery of these men's ancestors won back our house and land."

"The Torquil led them, sir. They were his clan by inheritance, bound to follow him, bound to fight for him."

"Nay, father, the clans were originally owners-in-common of the soil of their native district. They elected their chief. Even down to the days of Culloden the clans enrolled themselves under one or other of their feudal nobility, as they preferred. They always had a right in the land which their arms conquered and preserved."

"You are going too far back, Donald. It is a far cry even to Culloden. We are talking of the nineteenth century."

"Justice is not altered by the lapse of time."

"Donald, I can allow a great deal for the romantic notions of a young man, but I have not the inclination to discuss questions which affect us no more than what is going on in Jupiter. It

will be your business to call together the crofters of Torquil and Easter-Torquil, and also the ten families in Glen Mohr, and try and induce them to return peaceably the land so long loaned them. They must be made to understand that there is no law in Scotland to prevent my resuming possession of my crofts and cottages, and, consequently, of all grazing privileges."

"If they refuse?"

"They must leave this part of the country. That is the only alternative. The whole of Tasmer is going under sheep, except the deer forests. I should prefer to have them leave. Indeed, I do not see what the people in Easter-Torquil can do else. They are not fishers, and without grazing-land they cannot be farmers. As soon as the weather permits, I wish you to see them. Explain the matter as kindly as possible, but let them understand clearly nothing can alter my intentions. The tie between us must

be broken, but I wish it broken as gently as possible."

"I am sorry to disobey you, father, but there is absolutely nothing in life which would make me tell an honest, pious, hard-working Torquil to leave the land."

"Do you think you are wiser and better than all the Highland gentlemen who have followed, or who are about to follow this course? Torquil braes will carry three thousand black-faced wedders, but how can I feed my sheep if every cotter in Torquil puts his also on them? Property has its rights, Donald."

"Property has its duties, also, father. How could I go and tell Rory Mackenzie to take his twenty sheep off the braes? The thing is impossible!"

"Well, sir, then the sheriff must do your duty. He may do it less kindly, but your pride and feelings will be spared."

"Even as a matter of prudence, father--"

"What do you know of prudence? Lovat's

maxim is the true one in this case—when it will pay a landlord to turn cultivated land into a sheep-run, or a deer forest, the land never ought to have been cultivated at all. You know well how much there is to do every winter for the cottagers. They are cold, hungry, sick, and it is to the Torquil they come. The situation is demoralizing to them, and unjust to me. It is high time we stepped out of the middle ages.”

“But there should be some preparation, some—”

“Donald, there is nothing more tiresome than a man who persists in making a dead idea of himself.”

“Are justice, kindness, honesty, dead ideas?”

“Feudal chivalry and romantic self-denial are. Lord Macdonald has banished the peasants of Sollas at sword-point. Colonel Gordon removed every crofter from Barra and Uist by legal process. Breadalbane has turned thirty thousand of his acres in Glenorchy into a hunting-park. Sutherland, Argyle and Athol are doing the

same thing on their estates, on a much larger scale. When an age grasps an idea and resolves to carry it out, it is ridiculous to champion one in antagonism to it. I have a right to expect your help in carrying out plans which are so important, not only to yourself, but which embody the welfare of those who are to follow you. In our position, it is a shame to only consider personal likes and dislikes. A true nobleman looks backward and forward both; only the peasant soul begins and ends all controversies with and in himself."

He spoke with an air of grieved melancholy, and Donald felt unable to put into speech the passions which made such a turmoil in his breast. Perhaps indignation that he had been selected as the tool of oppression was the most dominant feeling. He had spent a part of nearly every year of his life at Tasmer; he had visited in the cottages, been petted by the old men and women, gone on the hills with the hunters, been taken by the fishermen in their

boats. Sir Rolfe, who had been educated in a French seminary, and passed from it into the army, had no such intimate knowledge of the Torquil peasants. To him they were simply tenants, with some very indefinite and undesirable claim upon him because of relationships in the past; and in his heart he regarded this claim as far more of a nuisance than a pleasure. A tenantry of peasants who were not Torquils, who would treat him with less affection and more subservience, would much better suit that taste for power which military authority had developed in him.

Yet, in deputing the task of warning the people of the new order of things to Donald, Sir Rolfe had no desire to shirk unpleasantness for himself. He could have sent the factor as his representative, but he really wished to give a more kindly air to what he knew was an unkind proceeding, and also to divest the movement of that element of law so offensive to the Highlandman. He wanted his own way peace-

ably, and he believed that Donald would not be opposed, where the factor or sheriff might come very badly off. Donald, however, was stubborn in his opposition.

“If this sorrow must come to our people,” he said, “do not make me the bearer of it. I cannot do it, sir. I might, indeed, deliver your words to these poor friends of mine; but if they wept, I should weep with them, and if they were angry, my heart would burn with theirs.”

“Some fathers would bitterly resent such a speech, sir. I have been much among young men. I know their illusions and affectations, their impulsiveness and assurance, their quixotic ideas of generosity and equity. Twenty years old has a standard of right and wrong which belongs to twenty years. At fifty you will smile at your own folly, and be very grateful to me for the decided step I am taking to-day. Take the world as it is, sir, and not as it ought to be in your opinion. You are probably wrong

on every point, if you can imagine yourself wrong."

"Father, if what you say is true, and Tasmer can really be made so wealthy, why not let the Torquils and Mackenzies remain and help and share in the new developments. Call them together; tell them as you have told me, what the forests and moors can be rented for. Build on the seaside, where land is worth nothing, new cottages for those who must remove from the hills. Out of the increased rental, surely a compensation could be given them. There must be some way of getting all this good, without doing all this evil."

"Donald, in your nurse's arms you cried for the moon. You are crying for it again, and you are as likely to get it in this case, as you were in the first."

"Then excuse me, this morning, sir. I will think over what you have said. To-morrow I will give you an answer."

"The best answer, the shortest answer, is

doing the thing you are asked to do. Let me assure you, I shall not change my purpose. If you agree to work with me, I shall be glad; if not, Lovat and I are both determined. That which two will takes effect. Good morning, sir."





CHAPTER IX.

FATHER MATTHEW FOR THE PEOPLE.

Donald's dismissal was curt and authoritative, and he showed plainly his sense of offence in it. He saw that his opposition had but confirmed Sir Rolfe in his intentions. He feared that he had spoken unwisely ; perhaps he ought to have temporized, have yielded a little here, in order that he might have gained a little there ; that, in short, compromise would have served the interests of all better than reproaches and opposition. But a young man of twenty-two, who knows how to arrange his cloak to suit the wind, is simply not a young man at all.

He went with burning cheeks and uplifted head through the long, shivery passages, and down the gloomy stairs. There was a fire burn-

ing in the main hall, but the sticks were green and wet, and Fergus was growling at the wrong wind and the damp air, as he tried in various ways to coax the smoke up the wide chimney.

“There is not a screen nor a draught to please the fire this morning, whateffer. It iss out, it will haf to go. A fire that will not burn; it is out, it will have to go. No fire at all will be better than one that iss smoking.”

Donald scarcely answered the old man, but his words made an unpleasant impression on him. People in trouble and perplexity are apt to go back to augury and to take as oracles first utterances and signs. So, Donald felt that as no screen or draught would make the fire burn, no entreaties or arguments would make Sir Rolfe feel as he felt. The fire would have to be put out. He would have to give up his efforts. And, if no fire was better than smoke, so, also, silence would be better than hopeless quarreling.

Something like this train of thought was in

his mind ; but, as yet, his mind was only a whirl of angry and sorrowful thoughts. He longed for Sara. She was not clever, and she did not always agree with him, but they talked together on terms of familiar confidence. While reasoning with her he was really reasoning with himself, and he generally felt satisfied and composed after talking over any event with her. But, Sara was not only far away, she was engrossed, altogether engrossed, by the brilliant life she was leading. He took her last letter and re-read it. Fine dress, fine entertainments, rich and noble lovers, these were its topics ; and Donald felt how useless it would be to trouble her gay hours with his own perplexities and sorrows.

The carry of the storm was directly northward ; he stood mournfully at the window and watched it. The rain, driven furiously before a mad wind, was streaming through the air in disordered ranks ; the clouds were flying rapidly in great grotesque masses, touching the tops of

the fir-trees like a gloomy veil ; the black ocean was tossing and raging as if a battle were going on among its billows. His thoughts, fleetier than the wind, yet troubled as the waters, flew swiftly to the small gray manse at Ellerloch. How well he could see the girl he loved in it ! Her handsome face grave 'and tender with thoughts of him. Her slim, tall figure, her busy hands, her pleasant voice—not he who raised the shade of Helen had a greater power than this true lover, for he thought of Roberta until she seemed present with him ; until the thought like an actual presence soothed and comforted him.

The letter brought by Angus had been his last communication from her. For two weeks he had been unable to send any message ; the wind had been so constantly adverse, that even Angus had been afraid to risk the journey. But Donald was not troubled by any of the doubts or silly jealousies that some lovers delight in encouraging. He trusted Roberta as he trusted

himself. He knew that she understood how rare and precious communication must be; and it had been decided that letters by the ordinary mail would be useless and irritating—the village postmaster being a deacon in Mr. Balfour's church—a man who neither for gold nor pity would favor love disallowed by a parent on such religious grounds.

Still he did write to her. It was impossible to bind affection so strong in bands of silence. He told her of his love, his hopes and doubts and loneliness, in long, long epistles, which were dated and put away, until the happy opportunity came for sending them. Angus was watching for it; he had the precious packet in his possession; the boat was ready to slip her anchor at the first flurry of favorable wind, and toward sundown there appeared a prospect of it. In the west there was a streak of crimson; the wind had fallen and shifted southerly; the rain was nearly over. Donald hastily finished the letter in hand, and went down to the village

to give it to Angus, for he thought it likely he could leave with the turn of the tide.

He fancied that Helen Mackenzie received him with constraint; that even Angus was not quite like himself. How could he expect it, if they had heard of Sir Rolfe's intentions? And how were they to know that he was not to blame in the matter? Yet he could not defend himself without blaming Sir Rolfe, and he did not dare, without good reason, to hurry any such justification. On his return to the castle, he called at the rectory to see Father Contach, for Helen Mackenzie's coolness wounded him very much, and he felt the need of comfort and advice.

The father heard him silently and patiently, his white, intellectual face growing finer as he listened. Once, when Donald alluded to the removal of the whole people, his cheeks crimsoned, but he instantly laid his hand over the cross upon his breast, and suffered not himself to speak. Indeed, after Donald had ceased, the

silence was for some minutes unbroken; but the young man understood the pause, and communed solemnly with his own heart during it.

With a sigh, Father Matthew lifted his head and looked at Donald. He sympathized keenly with his sense of shame and wrong, but it was his duty to assume the calmness he was very far from feeling.

“My son, what is your anger about?” he asked. “Because you are likely to be spoken evil of when you do not deserve it. It is indeed, mortifying to your sensitive nature, but one of the best penances which the heart can offer is to endure a continual cross and abnegation of self-love.”

“Is it right for me to be made the tool of oppression? No; I will not disgrace my manhood by turning these people out of their homes. They have as much right to them as I have.”

“Stop, Donald. Can they show any legal right to them? Alas! No.”

“Because they trusted to the Torquil, they have the moral right. Is not that sufficient?”

“If this earth were Heaven, if God’s kingdom had come, if His will were done, the moral right would be the strongest of all rights.”

“I cannot rest, Father. Helen Mackenzie has made me thoroughly miserable. Come with me to Tasmer, and speak to Sir Rolfe for me.”

“Yes; I will go. I have spoken once. I will speak again. I did not think the matter was to be hurried on so rapidly.”

“The families in Easter-Torquil are to be warned to leave at Whitsuntide. There are thirty-six families, numbering nearly two hundred people; what is to become of them? Perhaps I ought to speak to them; will they give up the grazing if I ask them?”

“They cannot live without grazing-land. They have not the sea to help them when the soil fails. To refuse them grazing is virtually to expel them from their cottages and crofts.

There is no need to serve them with a notice of dispossession."

"I know, and they are our own race and blood. They won the lands we call ours to-day. Father, you must prevent this great wrong. Sir Rolfe is at present under the influence of Simon Lovat; he is not hard-hearted. He loves piety and virtue. He will listen to you who are his guide and confessor."

"Alas, my son! They who listen not to the witness which is within every man's breast are not likely to heed either the law or the prophets; no, nor yet listen, though one came from the dead. I hope that you were patient and respectful to Sir Rolfe; reproaches will only make him more determined to carry out his plans in spite of you."

"I was angry, but I said little. It was hard to be patient, and I fear I shall not be able to restrain myself when we speak again."

"Hide the cross of our Lord within your

breast. As long as you firmly clasp it in your hand, surely the enemy will be at your feet."

As he spoke they left the rectory together. The night was dark and the walk was not a cheerful one. The drops of rain from the firs wet them like a shower, and the wind ran through the old trees with those pitiful, sinister wails it learns one knows not where. The old gray castle looked unusually gloomy. There was the dull glow of the fire in the parlor, but all the windows up-stairs, except those in the Torquil's room, were blank and dark. Fergus was long in coming to open the door. He had been in the kitchen discussing with the women the strange, sad news which had only just become known to them. When he saw Father Matthew, he probably divined on what errand of mercy he had come; for he looked into his face and then suddenly covered his eyes and began to cry like a child.

Donald could not bear it. He bent his head, and his mouth was twitching with suppressed

emotion. He did not wait to hear what request the old man was making amid his passionate sobs. He knew that he had daughters and grandchildren in Easter-Torquil, and that his son farmed and fished in the village below ; and he understood the anxiety and fear that were in his heart. But he would not wait to hear it voiced, lest he should speak words that he might regret ; and so, lifting a candle hastily, he went to his room. The fire had been allowed to go out. Donald never remembered such inattention before. It said more to him than any words of complaint could have done. Fergus must indeed have been utterly miserable to neglect a duty so necessary to his comfort.

Indeed, Fergus had never before known such sorrow. The Celt has many faults, but he has a heart overflowing with the tenderest domestic affections. He, of all fathers on the earth, can best understand that passionate wish of Hebrew parental woe—"Oh, my son ! Would to God that I had died for thee !" Fergus could not

endure the thought of his children and their babies—wanderers, seeking a home. He felt that at least he must share their sorrow and desolation; and yet he had been fifty years in Tasmer, and it was no light personal grief to break bonds of such long growth, and to forsake the roof that had been, in the main, such a happy shelter.

He said not a word of this condition of affairs, but the almost childlike condition of helplessness and grief in the old man's face was sufficient. Father Matthew understood it all, and the good priest went into the presence of the master of Tasmer with a heart burning with just anger. Sir Rolfe was sitting brooding over the fire. Occasionally he lifted his eyes to the open door of the oratory, whispering, when he did so, some audible prayer; for in the faintly lit gloom the great white cross was solemnly visible.

It was the first object that met Father Matthew's vision, and with a rapid step he passed Sir Rolfe, and for a few moments silently pros-

trated himself in that silent presence. His face was almost as pale as the lifted cross when he re-entered the room and set his chair upon the hearth, and Sir Rolfe was compelled to notice the intense feeling in the usually placid countenance.

The subject was immediately opened, and with an indisputable affection and authority, the priest pleaded for his little congregation. He went over the arguments which Donald had suggested but not dared to press. He spoke of the Highlander's intense love for his own land.

"They cling to these bens and straths like Alpine trees to their rocks," he said. "How can you tear up whole families by their roots, and put the torch to so many happy, pious little homes? They are dear to them as Tasmer is to you. Is not one little Highland child worth all the land in Kintail and Lochaber? You are a soldier, Sir Rolfe. You know what the Highland soldier is. You have seen the 42d and the 93d in battle. They have possessed and defended

these mountains from immemorial time. They have filled the world with the glory of their deeds. Have pity on your comrades in arms! They are the children of the Most High. Have pity upon those who kneel at the same altar with you?"

"Father, I have thought of all these things. The past is past. We are come to an entirely new era of development. The law of progress is that it must tread under foot feelings hitherto held sacred. These people have lived in semi-barbarism and been content with it. When the eagle thinks it time for her young to take to their own wings and provide for themselves, she tears up the nest. I, and you, have seen the wise birds do it. If I now destroy these antiquated huts, and send their inhabitants into the world, they will learn that life has objects and hopes, yes, and pleasures, they had not dreamed of. In a few years they will thank me. I can wait for my justification."

"You will send them from the pure, healthy

life of these ancient hills, to the great cities, where disease, degradation, poverty and death await them. The oldest men and women among them are but children—simple, pious children. They are not fit for the world. Have pity on them !”

“If any wish to go to Canada, I will do all I can to help them.”

“Are you able to send them all together there?”

“The idea is absurd. I might help some young, strong fellow, who was able to make good use of help ; but—”

“Then you would only further break to pieces the shattered homes. William Rufus brought on himself a violent death and the execration of centuries for depopulating the New Forest in order to make a hunting-park. That was an act done in days of cruelty and darkness. You and other Highland gentlemen, in an age of high civilization, are about to turn ten counties over to wild animals. Very soon, it will be

forests from the south border of Perthshire to the sea-board of Ross. From Deeside to Speyside we shall find nothing but deer; no men, no women, no children, no homes."

"Father, I do not interfere in your affairs."

"But you would have the right to interfere in them if I were to violate my duty as you are now violating yours. Every peasant in Torquil would have the right to call me to account."

"Listen to me. There is right on my side, also."

"Surely, I will listen."

"I have immense deer forests. Hitherto they have been lying idle. I can make six thousand pounds a year out of them alone. Have I not the right to make it?"

"What harm do the few crofters do on the fringe of these forests?"

"They are forever quarreling with gamekeepers, and forever claiming rights on the hills which disturb the deer. These shooting-ranges will be let entirely to rich Englishmen. They

have none of our traditional interest in the peasantry and the clans; but they have all an Englishman's ideas with regard to the sacredness of property. They will not rent a shooting unless these troublesome peasants, with their antiquated notions of their own dignity and rights, are removed. Father, your ideas would disorganize society; they are simply socialistic."

"And I am a socialist in the sense in which Christ Jesus taught socialism. So is every priest at the altar. So is every religieuse in our fraternities and sisterhoods. He allowed only one claim to power: that of a man serving his fellows. 'Let him that would be first among you be servant of all.'"

"You are my friend, my counselor and my confessor. In matters of piety I defer entirely to you. In worldly matters, Father, you are not able to judge for me. Are you not in the world, yet not of the world? A living man, and yet, as regards all that makes daily life, a dead man?"

"No, no, no! It is you, Sir Rolfe, that are

dead." Then, passing quickly to within the door of the oratory, he stretched out his arms to the Christ upon the cross, and cried out in an ecstasy: "*I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me !*"

Sir Rolfe was profoundly affected, but he was not convinced. He rose, and taking the priest's hands said humbly :

"Do not judge me with severity. My intentions are good. I have heard you say there is no sin without intention. One of the dearest objects I have is to rebuild and to beautify the church at Torquil."

"Alas! Alas! Can you give stone and mortar as a ransom for the souls of men? For the living stones you are going to pull down and break in pieces and scatter abroad?"

He went away with the words; leaving the master of Tasmer to ponder the solemn question he had asked.



CHAPTER X.

THE MINISTER'S INTERFERENCE.

"Love gives esteem, and then he gives desert ; he either finds equality or makes it."

"To be heavenly is to know that the commonest relations, the most vulgar duties, are God's commands."

"Respect we owe, love we give, and men mostly would rather give than pay."

There are times in every life when it seems best to cease reasoning about events, and let circumstances decide for us. Sara Torquil, after some weeks of triumphant social success, and private heart-aching, doubts and fears, came one morning in a certain way to this conclusion. Her entrance into London fashionable life had been made under very favorable circumstances.

Lady Moidart belonged to a set the most exclusive, and her radiantly lovely niece was at once the fashionable beauty of the season. When she arrived in London she found her advent had been chronicled in somewhat extravagant terms, and she could not help looking with a great deal of interest through the number of the *Court Journal* which had done her this honor.

She saw also in it a mention of Lord Lenox's movements; it was quite evident he was taking his full share in the festivities of the world in which he moved. Her cheeks glowed and her eyes grew luminous as she reflected that he would in all probability learn that morning of her arrival in London. He was a favorite of Lady Moidart's, and accustomed to visit at her house; she was, therefore, certain that he would call upon them at once.

With the greatest care she arrayed herself in the pale-blue tints he approved, and which certainly gave a marvelous charm to the exquisite coloring of her complexion and the crown of red-

brown hair which was a glory to her. So restless, so happy with expectation was she! Yet she forced herself to sit with apparent calmness at her embroidery frame—forced herself to attend to Lady Moidart's plans, and even to take an interest in them, though she was listening with all her soul, at every clang of the door-bell, for the sound of steps, which, however light upon the thick carpets, she was certain she would be able to detect.

Many visitors came, but Lenox came not. Hour after hour passed, the whole day went, the evening also. He did not call, and he did not send either an apology or a message of congratulation. Lady Moidart never noticed the omission. It appeared to Sara as if she talked of every one but Lord Lenox. For a whole week she endured this silent alternation of hope and despair. Every morning brought the hope, every night the despair. She did not meet him in the Row, nor see him at the opera, and as she was to be presented the following week, it had

been 'decided that she should accept no invitations until her homage at court had been paid.

Very often she was on the point of mentioning his name to Lady Moidart, but a delicate reserve about a matter so personal always sealed her lips when the actual words were to be spoken. At length one Sunday night he was announced. It was just at dark when Lady Moidart was half asleep upon a sofa. Sara was at the window looking thoughtfully into the gloomy square. She had not heard the bell; she had ceased to expect him. His entrance was so unexpected that she could scarcely speak the few words of courtesy necessary. He was perfectly calm, and apparently as indifferent as if they had never met before.

He paid his respects to Lady Moidart and then turned to Sara with outstretched hand. As she took it his eyes sought hers, and she was compelled to endure that questioning look of tenderness in them which she knew so well. She dropped her white lids to hide the tremu-

lous joy which it was out of her power to control. She forgot, she forgave his dilatory notice of her arrival, she tried, as loving women ever try, to be fair and sweet in his eyes.

Yet, his whole visit, when she reviewed it, pained her deeply. He suffered Lady Moidart to talk of plans and parties which entirely ignored him, and he made no protest against her neglect. He spoke of his own engagements without reference to Sara ; he said, with a laugh of affected self-depreciation, that he would have been glad to be their escort to a sale at Chrystie's, but that it would be detrimental to Sara to be seen with such a poor fellow as he was known to be. In a score of ways he made the indignant, yet affectionate woman feel that the love of Tasmer could not be transported to London. And yet she told herself that he might be trying to deceive Lady Moidart ; for she could not misunderstand that sudden leaping up of feeling into his face, that reluctant separation of their hands, that indefinable some-

thing, impalpable as the atmosphere, and yet beyond all reasoning away.

In reality, Lenox did love her as much as it was possible for him to love. But he was a man who, without being vulgarly fond of money, knew well the value of money. He was aware that Sara's fortune was as yet a mere trifle. Sir Rolfe, if he lived and carried out his clearance policy, might become a rich man and leave his daughter a handsome income, but—and there was so much hung upon that “but.” He could not afford to marry her for some years, unless he preferred marriage and Continental economies to a bachelor life of English comforts and English society. There were hours in which his decision on this matter wavered very much. Sara was such a pearl among women. Her beauty entranced him, and he knew all the piety and amiability of her nature. She was not brilliant or clever, but he did not like brilliant, clever women, and Sara Torquil was precisely his ideal wife, if she had only been as rich as she was

beautiful and good. So he suffered in his way, also ; not as much as Sara, for he was not capable of much mental suffering, but quite enough to make him feel at times as if he would run all risks of future discomfort rather than give her up to any other pretender to her favor.

It was singular that Mr. Maclane, the only real rival he had, never gave him a moment's uneasiness. He saw that he was often at Lady Moidart's, and frequently driving with Sara ; but he supposed it was only the friendship of an elderly man for a lovely woman who had been his hostess and companion during a few pleasant weeks. Maclane was far too prudent a lover to make his attentions obtrusive even in Sara's eyes. She only knew that he divined, as if by instinct, when he could give her pleasure or do her service, and also when it was the precise moment to relieve her of his presence. Insensibly she grew to rely upon a love which never under any circumstances failed her ; which never

demanded anything from her ; which was never absent when desired, and never present when unweicome or *mal-apropos*. Long before winter was over it had come to be a question in her mind between the two men. Lenox gave her so many anxious hours, so many self-humiliations, so much of that hope deferred that makes the heart sick. Maclane never suffered himself to be associated in her mind with anything unhappy or unwelcome.

So, beneath the outside triumph, beneath the songs and the smiles and the beautiful apparel, and the atmosphere of luxury and pleasure, there was this constant under-current of the future ; and Sara knew very well, that, after all, it was the real tide in her affairs, and that it was bearing her on to her life's destiny. At first she tried to understand and control it, but she soon discovered that its forces and tides were far beyond her knowledge or even her imagination.

" We are all the creatures of circumstances," Lady Moidart was fond of asserting. " If you

could write a letter to them, Sara, what truth there would be in signing yourself—' Your humble and obedient servant.' As for making circumstances, as Napoleon advised, I consider it sinful folly. Drift with the tide of events, Sara, and you are as likely to get into harbor as if you tied yourself to the wheel of your own foresight or wisdom."

Sara was too diffident and too personally reticent to dispute this position; but the placid smile which Lady Moidart took for her assent was, in reality, the result of that sweet and sudden inward reliance which the habit of piety grants. Her soul passed with a thought the drifting and the turmoil of chance and circumstance. However hidden the tide of her life, the pilot of the Galilean lake knew all its shoals and currents. However perplexing the events with which she had to deal, she could go to Mary, Mother of Mercy, comforter of all anxious and sorrowful women.

After, then, some weeks of feverish hopes and

uncertainties, she decided to let herself be guided by circumstances, which she committed afresh every day to the direction of her guardian angel. Some of these circumstances were, indeed, afar off and beyond her control. What could she say or do to prevent the many-sided tragedy preparing within the walls of Tasmer? She had understood it but very little when she was there; the wrong, the misery likely to flow from it, she had no conception of. Lord Lenox spoke of the clearances on his own estate as improvements. The people of Torquil never concerned her in the same way as they interested Donald. They were not likely to be her tenants; she had not the personal knowledge of them which he had. Her mind had been fully occupied with the prospects of her visit to London and her hopes respecting Lord Lenox. The subject of the Highland clearances, though she heard gentlemen discussing it, interested her in about the same manner as the bills before Parliament or the prospects of the wheat crop.

Yet, little as she thought of the subject, it was the current setting toward her destiny. She was watching other currents, hoping from others, fearing from others. She never thought of this one. It was out of her sight, almost out of her hearing; it was beyond the horizon of her usual life. Neither did Maclane think it worth taking into his consideration. It was the one thing touching Sara's life which he ignored. Yet, it was the current, the fortunate tide of his love.

For there had been a whisper among the hills of Tasmer—a soughful and sorrowful whisper of coming evil, some weeks before that night on which Father Matthew Contach made his urgent appeal for the homes of the peasants. After it, the whisper soon became a great cry of grief and indignation. The advice which is not taken irritates; and Sir Rolfe, after he had shaken off the personal influence of the priest, resented his interference. He denied to his own heart the claim of the people to any share in the Torquil

AS SHE TOOK HIS HAND, HIS EYE SOUGHT HERS.—See Page 17.



lands. If King George and the advancing spirit of the age had broken up the clan system, it was not his fault. He was compelled to suffer a certain loss of power and dignity. The people lost certain privileges. He was about to make the best of what was left to him. They must do the same. If they were men, they would be glad to do it. Even parents came to a time when they expected their sons to seek a career for themselves. The tie between himself and the clan was worn away to a mere sentiment; it was an imposition on their part to plead it. The word imposition always roused him. As soon as this idea came into his mind, he passionately assured himself that he would never submit to it.

The first result of this decision was a decided estrangement between the Torquil and his son. He saw that he could expect no effective assistance from Donald; and his first movement was to send for his factor.

"Mr. Frazer," he said "you will procure

summonses of removal and serve them upon the tenants of Easter-Torquil."

Frazer was ready to obey such a mandate. He considered it a sacred duty to the estate, and spoke so seriously on its undoubted good results, that Sir Rolfe experienced, after the consultation, a very unusual content.

To Donald, he did not again offer his confidence; he put the young man quite outside his favor and society. They met only at the dinner hour, and Donald thought his father contrived to make it the most uncomfortable hour in the day. Very naturally, during these bitter weeks, Donald's thoughts turned continually to Roberta Balfour; but as the winter went on, the interviews of the lovers became constantly more and more uncertain; still, when it was possible to take the boat along that dangerous coast, he followed out the plan devised by Angus Mackenzie.

But such meetings were exceedingly rare; so rare that even Mr. Balfour, whose suspicions

were constantly on the alert, never surmised them. They were not entirely happy meetings. Roberta had too honest a nature to feel satisfied with any clandestine pleasure. She was humiliated in her own sight every time they occurred; but when Donald had risked his life to see her she could not resist his entreaties. For her own gratification she would not have transgressed her father's will; for Donald's comfort she ventured to meet even her own heart's reproaches.

One day Donald arrived at Rosa Mackenzie's about noon, and Rosa immediately went to the manse with a few fresh eggs for the minister. There was not a word said to Roberta, but Roberta understood without a word that Donald was waiting to see her. She was reading aloud to her father, and when Rosa was gone the book was resumed. Perhaps there was something in the tone of her voice, in the forced calm of her manner, or in her flushing and paling face which roused Mr. Balfour's

wonder. He watched her as she read, with keen intentness. He was scarcely aware of a word in the argument Roberta was reading. Something seemed to have suddenly opened his eyes. When Roberta glanced toward the few cottages on the seashore, he saw in that glance matter for fears and doubts that troubled him greatly. After dinner was over, he said :

“ You need not read to me this afternoon, Roberta. You do not look as well as usual. Are you sick? Or nervous? Perhaps a walk in the fresh air will do you good.”

He did not wait for her reply. He was a man with a tender and scrupulous conscience, and he would not tempt his child to lie to him. He only wanted her to feel, if she were deceiving him, that her efforts had not been entirely successful. He suspected that Rosa Mackenzie had brought her a letter. He could not tell how or why the suspicion had come to him. Certainly he had neither seen nor heard anything to warrant it—yet there it was. Up and

down his own room he walked. He was watching his child, but he would not consciously admit the fact to himself. Still, when he perceived that she had dressed in haste and was going toward Rosa Mackenzie's cottage, his heart burned with foreboding anger.

For some minutes he stood considering the circumstance. Should he seek confirmation of his wrong? Or should he be content to enjoy such hours of hope and faith in his child as his doubts permitted him? Was not this a case where ignorance would be better than knowledge? He speedily denied the supposition—vehemently denied it. No, no; it was better to have the whole truth. If in pursuit of it he did Roberta wrong, then he would acknowledge the wrong and trust her forever afterward. If Roberta were really deceiving him, the sooner she was reminded of her sin and made aware of its uselessness, the better it would be. He determined, in the latter case, to do his duty as kindly as possible.

"I will remember my youth," he whispered. "I will not be hard with her; for the young man is her first lover, and he is, also, a very pleasant young man. Oh, if he had only been free and frank with me! I could have loved him well; yes, I could have loved him, though he is of an ill family and a blind faith."

It was with such tolerant thoughts he followed Roberta. If the lovers had been watching they could have seen him coming. But they sat together on the hearth, with their backs to the small window, far too deeply absorbed in their own sorrowful love to remember such a possibility. Rosa Mackenzie was kneading oat-cakes at the table. It was her kindly part to be absorbed in her occupation; and so, when the minister opened the door, all alike were astonished and dismayed. Donald and Roberta stood up hand in hand. They did not utter a word, but looked straight at him with sensitive faces and shining eyes. Rosa Mackenzie rubbed the meal off her hands, and as she pushed

forward a small stool, muttered apologies in mixed Gaelic and English.

Balfour did not notice her at all. He touched his daughter, and said, sternly:

"Roberta, go home! This is a tryst I will keep for you. Go home at once!"

"You are going to be angry with Donald, father—going to say unkind things to him. I will stay with him, for I am as much in the wrong as he is."

"I tell you, go home, Roberta. Do not disobey me."

"Father, I am to be Donald's wife. I must stand by Donald if you are angry with him."

"Mr. Balfour, forgive me. I would not have begged Roberta to see me here if you would have allowed me to see her in her own home, in your presence. Upon my honor, sir—"

"Your honor, sir! It is not worth the breath with which you assert it. As one man writes to another man, I wrote to you. I showed you that a marriage between yourself and Miss Bal-

your was impossible on every hand. I asked of your honor so much pity for my girl as would permit her to pass through the suffering you have brought upon her without false hopes and without sympathy, which could only bring more suffering. For your own selfish pleasure you come here to encourage her wretchedness, her futile longings for you, her ill-starred affection. There is not on the earth a more distinctly selfish creature than a young man who fancies himself in love."

"Sir—"

"I know what I am saying. For your own personal pleasure, you induce Roberta to break God's commands, to forfeit her own self-respect, to stain the stainless purity of her girlhood. You trouble all her hours. You have given her sorrow and restlessness for the joy and freedom of her old content and the glad companionship of nature. She was happy ; you have made her miserable. I, too—what have I ever done to

you but good? And how have you repaid me?"

"Fate has been very cruel to me."

"Fate! Fate! What nonsense you are talking! You have been cruel to yourself; cruel to Roberta; cruel to me. If, as you assert, you loved Roberta the moment you saw her, then the first night you slept under my roof you deceived me; the first time you broke bread at my table you were a traitor. Quite well you understood that there could be no question of a marriage between a Calvinist and a Romanist; between a nobleman's son and heir and the daughter of a poor Free-Kirk minister."

"Oh, sir! love hopes for impossibilities! Love has reasons that reason cannot understand. If you have ever loved—surely you have loved?"

"Sir, my love is a sacred thing. It is not for discussion. Don't imagine yourself to be the only man who has felt the sublime frenzy. Only, if you had been a man, you would have

borne the disappointment alone. You would have thought of your father and of Roberta's father. You would have shielded from useless longings the girl you profess to love. You would have respected the spirit and integrity of your faith, and never asked yourself—no, not once—if it were possible to marry a wife not of it. For you would have regarded the misery of a home in which there would be two altars and a divided worship—perhaps even a divided household. That very first night you would have worshiped with me as Naaman bowed himself in the house of Rimmon, under a protest, and I should have respected you for it. I vow to you, had you done this I should have honored you; I should have felt a sincere sympathy in your suffering, and all your life long I would have been your friend."

"I have made a mistake, sir. I thought of none of these things. I thought only of Roberta. Pardon me, I beg you."

"If I could forgive this selfish thoughtlessness, this reckless putting of natural craving before conscience and ordinary consideration of consequences, how can I forgive a man who lures my child from truth, from her home and her duty, and teaches her to deceive her conscience and her father?"

"It is my fault! It is my fault, father! I love Donald. If it be a sin to love him I am not sorry for the sin. I cannot give up Donald. I would rather die than give him up!"

"Dare not to say such wicked words, Roberta. Do you think the Almighty opens the gates of death for the puling of a love-sick girl?" Then, addressing Donald, he asked: "What says Sir Rolfe Torquil on this matter?"

"I have not yet named it to him. He is much occupied with important changes."

"Oh! You have not named it! Your behavior to your father is as bad as it is to me,

sir. Come, Roberta, it is time we were going. Bid Mr. Torquil farewell."

There were no tears in her eyes when she put her hand in Donald's hand. But the bitterest tears are shed inwardly. All her fine color had fled ; she was as pale as ivory.

"You will not forget me, Roberta?"

"As long as I live I will be faithful to you, Donald."

So she went from him, and for some minutes he remained motionless and speechless. He felt as if the tide of life was ebbing away from his heart · he thought he would die of grief ; he wished to die. Oh, where is the heart that does not hope to break under its first great sorrow !





CHAPTER XI.

THE CLEARANCE.

The summons for the clearing of Easter-Torquil had been served early in March. The cottages were to be vacated at Whitsuntide, and the time was at hand. Sir Rolfe had expected some resistance, for he was well aware that Macdonald and other Highland chiefs had only dispossessed their tenants by invoking the aid of the law, or the sword. But Macdonald's sept were Calvinists of the straitest kind; men who had been protesting from the days of Knox to the days of Chalmers. Resistance to any encroachment on what they considered their rights, or their opinions, was a familiar attitude to them. The Torquils and Mackenzies were equally familiar with the idea of loyalty and

obedience to their church, and to all constituted authorities. No people on earth had the law-abiding spirit more strong than the Catholic clans of Scotland; and though the finest soldiers that ever drew sword, they were incapable of defending themselves, except in an open and recognized fight. From behind a hedge they would not have fired a shot, even at the devil.

At the first mention of a clearance, they felt that their only hope lay in an appeal to the kindness of Sir Rolfe Torquil; and if that appeal failed, their homes must inevitably be desolated. Yet the clan tie was so strong and living in their own hearts, they could not imagine it less potent in the heart of the Torquil. The old men and women, especially, were certain that when the evil hour came, they would be permitted to end their days in their little cottages. If the young men and women and the growing children were removed, death would very quickly dispossess the few aged tenants, and every year would see

the land clearing itself of its human encumbrances.

Even Father Contach inclined to this opinion; though after every useless intercession he advised the people to expect no favor and make their preparations with all the speed possible. Some of them had friends in the Lewes; others in the Skye; a few had sons or daughters, uncles or cousins in North Carolina, where many of the Mackenzies fled after the bloody settlement of Culloden. Letters asking help had been sent to these various sources, and Father Matthew had also solicited assistance from richer congregations in various localities. He desired to keep the unhappy people together, and he thought it possible to collect money sufficient to send the little colony as one family to their kindred in America.

But letters asking assistance are not usually answered promptly, and Whitsuntide arrived and found the doomed exiles without any definite plans or any certain means. There seemed nothing to be done except to urge upon Sir

Rolfe a stay of proceedings until arrangements could be completed for the people's future. But Father Matthew had a strong repugnance to approach him again upon the subject. Such interviews had become more and more strained and painful, and he had found that every appeal to Sir Rolfe's justice or kindness had only intensified his sense of irritation and made him more determined to carry out his own plans without let or hindrance.

He took precisely this tone when the father made his final appeal.

"I am sorry to refuse you, personally, any favor, Father Contach, but I cannot permit my business to wait longer upon people notoriously inclined to procrastinate, and to rely upon any one but themselves. I have laid out a certain life-work. I am not a young man. I cannot wait upon probabilities resting upon some Torquil or Mackenzie in Lewes or America. It is unjust to ask me."

"But the aged?"

“Age has nothing to do with a principle. If I favor the aged, why not the little children? Hector Torquil is the oldest man in the clachan. Suppose I allow him and his wife Sheila to remain. I know that they will be continually mourning for their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I shall never hear the last of their loneliness and helplessness. Such half-measures are cruel all around. Do you suppose I derive any pleasure from sending these people away? I assure you it is a great trouble, and has been, as you are aware, something also of a loss; for I put into your hands fifty pounds for their assistance, a sum of ready money I cannot very easily spare. The good of the estate requires that they should be cleared out root and branch; and when a trouble requires the knife of the surgeon, the doctor has no charm for it, Father. I will have no half-measures in this matter.”

So the flitting was a determined thing, and a few of the younger people understood it to be

so; and without indulging any further hope, they departed as quickly and quietly as possible. But when Whitmonday came there were still over a hundred souls in Easter-Torquil who knew not where to lay their heads. Fortunately, it was a glorious spring day, the corries, hazy with blue-bells, the green, green straths, white with daisies; the wind fresh, but not cold; the sky blue, the air full of exhilarating sunshine. Never had the little clachan looked so fair, so peaceful, so happy. But, oh! What anxiety and fears and sad regrets were at every hearth.

About ten o'clock the factor and a body of men arrived. Immediately they began to raze the empty cottages. For a short time the people looked on in bewildered grief, but very soon affairs were made terribly clear to them. There was not a shadow of favor to be shown to any; even Ann Ross, an aged, bed-ridden woman, was to be removed to a family in the village of Torquil, who had agreed to care for her at Sir Rolfe's charge. The helpless old

crone filled the air with her cries as the men lifted her on to a litter and carried her down the mountains. It was the beginning of a scene of indescribable hubbub and suffering.

The men were mostly sullen and silent as they moved out of their homes their household furniture; but the women wailed, as if each separate woman were at the funeral of her first-born; and the children, at first full of wonder, grew cold and hungry as the day wore on, and added their cries to the general confusion. In the meantime the factor and his men went busily on destroying the clachan; as quickly as a cottage was cleared it was taken possession of; and soon after three o'clock every door had been closed.

It was then growing imperative for the ejected crofters to seek shelter for the night. Most of them had relatives or friends in Torquil village; and so, laden with their most necessary utensils and clothing, and carrying their youngest children, they went together down the mountain. They had to pass the church, and

with one impulse they gathered around the rectory door. Even at this hour they could not abandon the hope that the good father, who had always before been sufficient for their sorrow, would still be able to help them. He had just returned from Balmacarra, where he had gone to meet the mail, trusting that it might bring help.

He was very weary and hungry ; but when he saw the old and the young standing around his door, uttering no complaint, as they watched with a wistful, sad patience, for him, his heart burned with sorrow and with righteous anger. He knew not what to do for them ; but in this extremity of his judgment, he passed rapidly from the rectory to the church, and prostrated himself before the altar. He did not speak to the people, but they saw his face, and they divined for what purpose he had gone into the immediate presence of God, and they waited with a touching resignation his will and word.

In a few minutes, they saw him standing in the open door of the church, his face bright

from his communion with Heaven, his hands outstretched, as if to assure them of his blessing and assistance. They understood that he wished to speak to them, and quietly gathered around him.

“My children,” he said, “the day of trouble has come at last, but do not fear. God takes particular care of the good, and those whom He loves He saves. I know, and I am sure that this trial shall in the end be for your welfare. A little while you must wait upon God. Well, then, wait here, in His precincts, in the shadow of His sanctuary. Go into the church-yard, and erect large booths there for your shelter. It is God’s acre, no man dare molest you. Many old masts are lying around; take them for supports. The roofs can be made of furze and straw, and under these shelters build your fires, and spread your blankets around them. Over the graves of your fathers you may dwell in safety; your Mother Church will hold you in her arms; and I at the altar will make continual intercession for you. Here you must

remain until I have another word for you. Be patient, it will certainly come. Keep together, for to scatter over the country looking for work is to become paupers. You must suffer together, and together you will be helped."

The words were like wine to the dejected people, and they flew through the village like fire. The fishers left their nets, the young, strong women brought straw and whatever might be useful, every lad and every lass that could lend a helping hand worked willingly; and against the four corners of the church-yard wall—which made an excellent shelter on two sides—they erected four large booths. Father Matthew went from group to group encouraging and directing the workers. He sent the mothers to the rectory to cook food, he folded the blankets about the weary children. All night long the fires burned brightly, and the work went bravely on, and when the sun rose again, the living had found homes among the dwelling-places of the dead.



CHAPTER XII.

S A R A.

“ Let still the woman take
An elder than herself ; so wears she to him,
So sways she level in her husband’s heart.”

In Tasmer Castle there was a wretchedness which no one spoke of, but which every one was sensitive to. Donald was kept fully aware of every movement by Fergus, but no one could have felt more completely helpless to avert or even mitigate misfortune, than he did. To express sympathy with the people was to condemn his father ; he had nothing else to offer. His own position was both humiliating and unhappy. After the winter weather set in, he could see little of Roberta ; his boat was no longer a refuge in times of trouble ; he was not

a sportsman, and when he went to the hills, and came home every day with an empty bag, he laid himself open to his father's sarcasms, and the disapproval and astonishment of the whole household.

More than once he had asked for his commission. It would at least give him an independent living and enable him to offer a home to Roberta if she would accept it. At any rate, it would make marriage a possibility. But Sir Rolfe heard these requests with an indignation that seemed unreasonable.

"Your work is here, sir," he answered, "if you would do it. You ought to be glad to assist me in quadrupling the value of an estate which is to be your own. It is a far greater work than idling in some foreign station, or dangling after women in home barracks. Military life is not what it was in my day. Then, a man saw service."

"I should like to try it, father. I am of no use

at home ; I am in the way. I am tired of doing nothing."

" Who told you that you were in the way? If you are no use, it is your own fault. I cannot afford to place you in the army until Sara is married. However, that event is likely to occur very soon. You will get your troop in a very few months, I suppose."

Perhaps in his heart Donald was not very sorry of the delay. Spring was at hand, summer before him, and during the months when it was possible to see Roberta, he did not feel much regret at being detained in her neighborhood by anything having the semblance of duty.

This conversation occurred a few days before the clearance. It is useless to speak of the shame and indignation he personally felt in the coming tragedy, and at his own total inability to oppose or prevent it. For it is the finest and most honorable natures that are the easiest enslaved by some domineering will—that are inapt to resist, harassed by scruples, astonished

at audacities they have a difficulty in comprehending. Donald would have cheerfully given his life for the people, and he could not lift a finger to help them.

During all Whitsunday he walked about the castle, restless, miserable, tormented with plans which he knew at once were hopeless and impracticable. And all day, though sunshine filled the rooms, the atmosphere in Tasmer was singularly sensitive. Several times Donald had the impression that some one had come into the room. There were visitings, answers, he knew not what intelligences, about him. As the day darkened the feeling deepened. He fell into a kind of visionary state, in which he seemed to lose all voluntary mental and physical power, and to be the passive recipient of impressions made by spiritual minds. The gloom upon his face brightened; a peace that passeth understanding filled his soul. In about an hour he rose up with a long sigh and went instantly to his desk and began to write.

It was a letter to Sara, telling her in strong, graphic sentences the trouble that was at Easter-Torquil, and begging her to hasten home and use her influence with her father, in behalf of the homeless peasants. Then he went to Father Contach with the letter, for he knew the priest was going to Balmacarra in the morning, and could see it so far safely on its journey, for a sudden anxiety for Sara's interference had become the prominent idea in his mind. Father Matthew noticed this, and asked why he had not thought of this influence before.

"I know not, Father. I supposed from Sara's letters she was too busily employed with her own affairs—too happy to be troubled."

"You do your sister an injustice, Donald. I never knew Sara Torquil put pleasure before charity or duty. Who or what urged you to appeal to her to-day?"

Then Donald revealed to his friend something of the spiritual experience he had just had—only something approximating it—for he had no

words to explain fully a condition transcending words.

“But, distinctly, as if you had breathed the message in my ear, some one said to me, ‘Write to Sara Torquil.’ And I awoke—if I were asleep—happy, comforted, assured of help. Can you understand me, Father?”

“Thank God, I can understand you, Donald! These infusions of heavenly light and comfort that come, we know not how, often when we are not looking for them, are blessed proofs of—what, think you?”

“I know not.”

“That we are united to other minds. Thoughts come from minds; they do not move about in the air. Good minds are joined thus to better minds, and the angels of God ascend and descend for our help and counsel. Remember what I tell you now, Donald: We are the inhabitants of two worlds. We have senses that open to all the beauties and sorrows of this portion of our Father’s mansion, and we have spiritual

senses that can open to an inner, a higher, a holier world. Blessed are they who have ears to hear and eyes to see things which are often hidden from the wise and recorded to the pure in heart."

"Then, Father, if there be good angels ever ready to teach and help the good, may there not be bad angels ever ready to lead still further astray the wicked?"

"Alas, my son, who can doubt it? 'Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin.' To a bad man there is constantly a series of suggestions being made, leading him to be worse. He never shows himself as bad as he feels. Something is always impelling him to profounder depths of sin and folly. Something worse than himself drags him lower and lower. If good angels cannot approach you, be very sure evil ones will. Choose, then, in whose company and under whose influence you will dwell."

Then Donald perceived by the father's still

face that he had finished the interview; and again commending Sara's letter to his care, he went back to Tasmer with far nobler thoughts than he had left it. His soul expanded to its lofty and illimitable relationships; he remembered "the cloud of witnesses." In the enthusiasm of his contemplation, he lifted up his face and spread out his hands to the Unseen, and again under the solemn sighing branches of the firs, realized that he was indeed the inhabitant of two worlds. A great resignation and trust succeeded to the angry turmoil of passions which had made him wretched for so many weeks. He could not understand how his letter to Sara was to procure help, but he firmly believed it would do so, and was sure, also, that he had inspired Father Matthew with the same confidence.

It arrived in London just as Sara had finished her preparations for returning home. Her visit had been prolonged much beyond its original intention, Lady Moidart usually spending the

Easter holidays on her own estate. There was in the house the feeling of outworn pleasure, and the anticipation of a change. Trunks encumbered the halls, and the tables were covered with packages, the last spoils of the Regent Street shops. Sara looked at the parcels in her own room with a sentiment of sadness and regret. It is only the very young and thoughtless who are not conscious of some dissatisfaction after foolish and reckless expenditure. Her last day's shopping had been altogether unnecessary. When Lady Moidart had urged her to make out a list of indispensable toilet adjuncts to take north with her, she had made such a list, and felt in the making of it that every item might be wanted at Tasmer, and could not be procured. But the possession of so many ribbons and gloves and scarfs was not half so satisfying as she had anticipated. They looked upon the whole a very paltry exchange for thirty sovereigns, and she admitted the fact to herself.

"I ought not to have spent the money. Father told me how hard it was to spare it, and poor Donald would have thought himself rich with thirty sovereigns."

She looked at the offending parcels with an air of aversion and vexation, and at that moment she received Donald's letter. She read it slowly, and then stood up to read it again. It was as if she had not been sure of her intelligence while in an attitude of inattention; as if, in the act of standing up, she gathered her faculties together. Father Matthew had understood her well, for, as she slowly but fully realized the condition of affairs Donald had painted in such vehement words, her countenance changed, she let her hands fall down, and stood pale and motionless for some minutes, just where the sorrowful news had found her.

She was not a woman apt to act upon impulse. She had discovered, when very young, that impulse is a bad guide; and, though she had never heard of Euripides, she had arrived at his

conclusion : " among mortals second thoughts are best." So she took no particular heed of the suggestion following immediately upon her first sensations of shame, anger and pity. Until her maid came to dress her for dinner, she thought of the situation. Donald had not asked her for any help, except her influence with Sir Rolfe. He had expected no other help from her ; but there was a feeling of " needs do " in her own soul, and she knew she would not escape from its strait until she had made an effort—an effort she was already dimly conscious of, and which she was waiting for events to set clearly before her.

" You are very tired, Sara," said Lady Moidart. " After the dance, the sleep. After London, Tasmer. I think you are ready for the change."

" I am very unhappy, aunt !" Then she opened Donald's letter and read it aloud. The old lady showed her resentment much more vividly than Sara had done.

" It is an unspeakable outrage," she said, pas-

sionately. "I have thought ill of your father all his days, but never that he would do so ill a thing. Has the man lost all conscience, all family pride and honor? He does not know what he is undertaking. Only certain natures—born money-grabbers—can make such wholesale cruelty pay them. Sir Rolfe is a soldier with some fine instincts left, which will perpetually interfere—such as sacrificing fifty pounds. Why should he give any of the price of these poor souls back? If he is going to take service with the devil, then, in common-sense, let him keep all the devil's wages. He must have a poor conscience if he can bribe it for fifty pounds."

'Hush! dear aunt! Father is not much to blame; he is completely under the influence of Simon Lovat.'

"That is no excuse, Sara. He need not be under his influence. Lovat is not a malignant contagion in the air which cannot be escaped; he is a poison which men deliberately lift and drink—yes, and hold in their hands and hesitate

and think over. Lord Lenox is another example of his influence. Before he inherited the Lenox lordship, when he had no hope of inheriting it, when he was only a captain in the Seaforth Highlanders, he was as pleasant and good-hearted a young fellow as I ever knew. I liked him. I helped him many a time. But how he has changed! The first clearance cost him some hours of indecision and regret; the second, not a thought. I have been truly told that the last of the crofters on his estate were removed under circumstances of the most unnecessary cruelty. I used to think him affectionate and honorable. I was mistaken. He is nothing at all now, if he is not unscrupulous and greedy of gold. I have no doubt he will succeed in his plans. He will have no misgivings and no relentings. In a few years his estate will be highly productive, and in the meantime he will marry Maria Crossley, whose father made her a million by brewing beer. But Sir Rolfe is too old to so completely

change his nature. There will be a few old military and gentlemanly scruples he cannot conquer: his whole policy will be weakened by them. He will commit small business indiscretions that will ruin him."

"If you could only talk to him, aunt!"

"I! child; he would not listen to me if I told how to save his life. And if you are dreaming of influencing him, dismiss all such false hopes. If Rolfe Torquil has made up his mind to carry out the clearance policy on the Tasmer estate, an angel from Heaven could not reason with him."

"My father is truly religious, aunt."

"I know it. There is a puzzle, a contradiction, in most characters, that none but God Almighty understands. How Sir Rolfe reconciles his injustice to his people with the ten commandments and the golden rule is beyond my comprehension; but I have not the slightest doubt that he has done so."

Nothing more was said upon the subject, but

Sara had plenty of matter for thought. It was the first time Lady Moidart had expressed any opinion about Lord Lenox. Sara had understood from him that the friendship between them was of the kindest and most confidential character, and she had wondered at their slight intercourse and interest concerning each other. She understood the change now; she understood Lady Moidart's fixed politeness and apparent carelessness as to his future. Much that had pained and perplexed her was now clear.

She never doubted a word her aunt had said. Lady Moidart had faults, but she did not lie. She was honorable even to an enemy. All she had said of Lenox might be taken without exceptions. No woman likes to be disenchanted. Even when the process goes on with intermissions of hope, it is a painful process, but Sara had come to the last hour of her illusion. She had often wavered in her opinion, she had suffered and forgiven, she had been as blind as those who will not see, she had gone through all the hopes and

despairs and self-humiliations of love's fitful fever. At that hour she felt no pity for herself and no love for Lenox; she was only sorry for the hours and the emotions wasted upon so unworthy an object. "Something in my own nature must be akin to him, or I should not have loved him," she thought, and she was ashamed under the self-condemnation. Still the renunciation was not completed without suffering. A first love, however unworthy, strikes its roots deep into the affections. Sara had a bad night, and in the morning, while the house was all in confusion with the packing, she put on her cloak and bonnet and went out.

Lady Moidart watched her a few moments, and concluded she was going to walk in the private park attached to the fashionable square in which they lived. But Sara went further than the park—went through many a busy street, until she turned into a silent court off a great thoroughfare, and found at the head of it the quiet church she wanted. How strange was

its dimness and silence in the very heart of London's tide of life and turmoil. She glided into a seat, in order to recover her thoughts and composure before she ventured to offer her petition; and it was not many moments ere she felt the soothing influence of the place.

A priest, in the white serge robes of the Brotherhood of St. Dominic, knelt motionless on the steps of the altar. There were a number of people in the church, all of them so engrossed with their own devotions that they knew not of her advent. One young man, evidently from the highest social ranks, was making the solemn way of the cross. He was in a rapture of meditation at the foot of the crucifix at the twelfth station. His hands were uplifted and clasped; his face raised and wet with tears. To him Calvary and the Christ upon it were as real facts as his own existence. Not far from him, a poor woman was whispering a heartful of grief into Mary's ear. Like Hannah of old, "she was in bitterness of soul, and she wept sore." The aged

and the young, the rich and the poor were there, each with their own sorrow, or hope, or anxiety, and the holy silence was broken by no sound but the sighing of the suppliant, or the murmured prayers at the altars or the stations.

In holy meditation, in earnest supplications, Sara spent her morning. She had much to give thanks for; she had counsel to inquire after; she had help to seek. She was surrounded by other implorers, but she was alone with God. The visit she had expected with so much youthful eagerness, was over. She had tried the world at its very best, tasted of all its pleasures, and she acknowledged to her soul, that morning, that a day in God's house was better than a thousand elsewhere.

She had gone into that house full of trouble and anxiety; she came away from it with a heart at rest. There she had left all her worrying hopes and desires about Lenox. There she had prayed for his soul's welfare and forever resigned all personal affection for him. In the

afternoon she expected Mr. Maclane. He had written to request an hour's private interview with her, and she understood quite well the question she would have to answer. He would ask her again to be his wife, and she had resolved to accept him. Hence her solemn renunciation of Lord Lenox. In the future, every thought of her heart must be for the man whose wife she had determined to be.

She had no misgivings ; she had put the last one away. If she were not in love, she had an affection and respect for him which she did not fear to trust. She honored him, for he deserved honor. She was proud of his political position, proud of his talents, and not indifferent to his great wealth. All her life long she had known the misery that comes from the want of money. She had reproached herself throughout the winter because of Donald's position ; but if Mr. Maclane made upon her the settlement he proposed, she would have gold enough to realize every good intent, every loving desire. Her

union with him could make so many others happy beside herself. And, surely, she thought a marriage of that kind must be better than one which gratified only a single selfish love.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE MINISTER CALLS ON THE BARON.

“Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou showest thee in a child
Than the sea-monster !”

“Never anger
Made good guard for itself.”

The temporary settlement of the expelled crofters of Easter-Torquil in the church-yard of Torquil was a matter of very serious annoyance to Sir Rolfe; but he did not feel as if he dared to clash opinions with Father Matthew about it. He knew that he had no legal right to urge their removal from it, and he was not anxious to enter into the moral right of the question in any shape. Yet nothing could have happened so

entirely shocking to his deepest prejudices, and so really uncomfortable to his conscience. It was as if the wronged Torquils had appealed from their living to their dead. He woke up from his sleep with an uncanny feeling of the great clan behind him being moved to wrath by such an invasion of their territory. He could barely reassure himself by considering that the chiefs of the family would be sure to understand and approve his motives. Had any of them in their raids on their neighbors, or in their fights with the Macdonalds, ever valued the lives of the men they led? No. They had sacrificed everything for the honor and perpetuity of their sept; and he was only doing the same thing according to the methods of the age in which he lived.

Yet there was some troubled spiritual element in the castle. Heavy footfalls were heard by all, and voices as deep as the sound of multitudes in one, and low, mournful sighs thrilling an atmosphere sensitive as life, and which to the

painfully attent ear seemed stirred by shadowy wings. Doors that had closed for generations were found open. One midnight, the great shield of Fergus Torquil, first Earl of Ross, fell to the ground with a ringing thud that woke every one in the castle with a feeling of terror. Donald, who had a temperament peculiarly responsive to any spiritual influence, lived during these days with one foot in the other world. And his confessor was too wise and holy a man to make light of any ascendancy because it was beyond mortal understanding and analysis.

“God has nowhere said He would not send spirits to warn men; and Christ by implication taught that they did so when He said: ‘Though one came from the dead,’ some would not listen.”

“But surely, dear Father, angels fit for the perpetual adoration of Heaven will not soil white souls with the sins and sorrows of earth?”

“Service is adoration. Are they not all ministering spirits? Angels are good men made perfect. It is in this way the holy Scriptures

speak of them. In this way, also, the fathers and saints regarded them. The first angels mentioned in the Bible, those which appeared to Abraham, are called 'three men.' The angels that appeared to Lot are called 'two men.' When Manoah said to the angel who appeared to him, 'Art thou the man that speaketh unto the woman?' he said, 'I am.' The angel that appeared to St. John forbade John to worship him, saying, 'See thou do it not. I am thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.' If the angels are good men made perfect, who are more fit to minister unto men, to warn them against sin, and guide them in sorrow? But as the same laws operate on the good and on the evil, may not wicked and undeterminate spirits still linger between two worlds, troubled by the things of earth which still hold them in dominion? In that intermediate world which the Church calls purgatory—the place of judgment—may not a part of the soul's punishment depend upon its knowledge of

what still goes on among the things of which it made idols? For instance, if the man who served gold instead of God, can see the gold for which he sinned against his soul, squandered and wasted, or in the hands of those whom he wronged or hated, how great and how fitting must be his remorse!

“And if those old Torquils who committed all kinds of outrages, and shed blood without stint to increase the number and power of their clan, can now see its chief scattering and wronging it, counting sheep and red deer as of more value than their descendants, no wonder they are moved and troubled even beyond the grave. It is not forbidden us to think of these things if we do it reverently.”

“Oh, Father! How good is God that He permits to sinful men a place of repentance and of expiation. If it were not so—if men went at once to Heaven or hell—”

“In such case, my son, men must be thoroughly heavenly or thoroughly infernal before

death. Very few mortals are either. Heaven and hell are not next-door neighbors. Christ taught us that between the two there is a great gulf—the state or place of judgment. It can do you no harm to live as if surrounded by those whom you will meet in the eternal world. Even from a good supposition you may derive good.”

This conversation occurred nearly a week after Donald's letter had been sent to Sara. Father Matthew had supplemented it with a few lines from his own hand, and the answer arrived just as Donald was rising to leave. The good priest's face brightened as if it had caught sunshine, and as he read the letter aloud to Donald his eyes shone with the glad soul behind them:

“BELOVED AND RESPECTED FATHER: In reply to your request, I say this—keep the people together. I shall be home in a very short time, and I am sure that I shall bring help. Lady Moidart incloses ten pounds to buy meal for them. Pray for me, dear Father, for I am about to take steps on a new road. Pray, then, for your dear child in Christ.

SARA TORQUIL.”

“It is good news, Father. I felt sure it would

come. Also, I think there will be a letter for me, and so I will hasten home."

Donald was not disappointed, and Sara had been much more explicit to him than to Father Matthew.

"I am going to marry Andrew Maclane, dear brother," she said. "I am going to marry him because I love and respect him; because he will make me happy; because I am sure he will be a good brother to you, and because I am sure I shall never be sorry or ashamed for the step I am going to take. I may not love him as Juliet loved Romeo, but I have a noble and sensible regard for my intended husband. We shall be true husband and wife, true friends, true companions, true workers together in everything that we believe to be right and good. I intend to take his advice, and ask his help about the Torquils. I shall do it at once. He will understand how best they can be provided for, without hurting our father's prejudices and his pride. We must remember that any help to them is interference with his affairs, and respect his feelings. I should think Father Matthew the best vehicle for assistance, but Andrew Maclane will know just what ought to be done, I am sure. Because I put him first in this matter do not think that any one can ever take your share of my love. My brother! My dear brother! In your place you will always reign supreme in Sara's heart."

With an affectionate pride, he slowly refolded

the comforting letter. To be loved so fondly by two such women as Sara Torquil and Roberta Balfour was surely a great blessing.

He turned to the window and looked over the sea. It was brightly blue, and dimpling all over in the sunshine. His boat lay rocking at anchor, and the temptation to set her free and go flying before the wind was too great to be resisted. Yet, though his father sought neither advice nor sympathy from him, he knew that he was sick and troubled, and he did not wish to leave Tasmers if there were any prospect of rendering aid to him. Sir Rolfe politely declined his society.

"There is nothing you can do. Factor Frazer," he said, bitterly, "will attend to such affairs as are urgent. By all means, go to sea, if you wish to go. The servants assert the castle to be a very undesirable human habitation. I suppose their terrors have affected you. Have you heard from Sara?"

"Yes, sir. I had a letter this afternoon."

"Did she tell you of her approaching marriage with Mr. Maclane?"

"She did, sir."

"Do you approve of it!"

"I do, sir; very much."

"That is satisfactory. I had begun to think it was impossible to please you."

"If I could please you, sir, that would make me happier than any other event."

Something in the young man's face and voice touched his father. He answered more kindly:

"It is hard, Donald, for age and youth to think alike. In a few years you will remember your attitude at this time with regret. You will wish you had stood at your father's side and helped to bear a burden almost too much for him to bear alone. Go away for a few days. Times of change are always painful. When Sara is married, I will talk with you about your future. All shall be done for your welfare that is possible."

He spoke so sadly, and yet so kindly, that Donald ventured to offer his hand. Sir Rolfe

held it a moment, and ere he turned again to his papers, wished him a pleasant sail ; adding :

“ By the way, if you should go northward try to find out something about that Melvich. I am not going to submit to his encroachments. He says I have no legal right in the waters we have fished for a thousand years. Legal right, indeed ! Use and wont have some rights, too, I suppose ! ”

And Donald, wondering that he could not see the same law applied to the ejected crofters, went to his boat with the sense of a bird set free, and took her out of harbor. It was near the gloaming ; the breeze was light and the sea rising and falling with a lazy send.

Just outside the harbor he met a boat making for it. She was not a fishing-boat, and she had a familiar look. He wondered a little where he had seen her before ; but he never suspected that it was an Ellerloch smack having Mr. Balfour on board. She came to land easily, the anchor chain flew out, and the minister landed

and stood for a moment looking around him. He had the air of a man bent upon some special errand; his face was somber and set, his movements without hurry and without hesitation. He stopped two fishers and asked them the way to Sir Rolfe Torquil's house, and they looked queerly at him, and said:

"The castle wass on the hill-top whateffer," and then noticing his clerical dress, they removed their caps and added: "It iss through the fir-woodt you will haf to go, sir, and, maype, it iss Father Matthew you will pe seeing first."

"Who is Father Matthew?"

"Father Matthew Contach! He iss the priest, praise God, and he is a goot man, mir-over. In the churchyard you will pe seeing him now, if you will pe going there."

Then they left him, and Mr. Balfour went toward the church, which was a notable landmark in the place. The scene in the churchyard instantly arrested him. It was near the hour for the last meal of the day. The fires

under the booths were burning brightly, the women were busy about the boiling kettles, the men were spreading pallets of bracken and blankets, and the priest, easily distinguished both by his habit and his air of authority, was standing among a group evidently explaining something to them.

Two women carrying fish and milk passed, and he stopped them and asked the meaning of such a singular sight. They told the story of the clearance of Easter-Torquil, and he was amazed at their patience. When he expressed his opinion of Sir Rolfe Torquil, one of them, with a movement of disapprobation and pride, said :

“You will pe a stranger, sir; there iss no stranger that can pe knowing the Torquil. It will not pe hiss fault whateffer; there wass bat men at hiss side, and they did make him do what wass not in hiss heart. It iss bat men. It iss not the Torquil whateffer.”

That was not Mr. Balfour's opinion. He had a feeling of satisfaction in discovering that these

Torquils were as bad as he had decided they were. He was not aware of this unworthy satisfaction, for he was too much exercised about other matters to enter into any form of self-examination, so he again and again assured himself :

“He is a bad man, a heartless and unjust man. No wonder he has a false and selfish son. I will not spare him a word of the truth, not I!”

To such thoughts he walked rapidly up to Tasmer, and reached it just as Fergus was lighting the great hall. He gave him his card with the information that he wished to see Sir Rolfe without delay. In his way, Balfour was as much a man of authority as Sir Rolfe himself. Fergus looked at him with respect and curiosity. A Free-Kirk minister was not a familiar sight to him, but he quickly decided that the visitor was an ecclesiastic of some order, and he gave him the low obedience and the reverential speech which he kept entirely for powers spiritual.

To Sir Rolfe the sight of the card was a pleas-

ant interruption to his own unhappy brooding. He was in hopes that it introduced some of the neighboring Highland gentlemen, with whom he could discuss the clearance policy, and by so doing re-assure his own mind. The "Rev. David Balfour" puzzled him. Catholic ecclesiastics were not accustomed to carry visiting-cards in their vestments, and he knew none of the Protestant clergy in the vicinity. But he was inclined for company, and not averse to gather opinions from all sources upon the one question which interested him.

So, as Mr. Balfour entered the room, he rose with blended dignity and courtesy, directing Fergus by a glance to place a chair near himself for Mr. Balfour's use. He did not take it, but remained standing, with one hand firmly grasping the back.

"To what circumstance am I obliged for the honor of your visit, sir?"

"If there be any honor in the visit, sir, it belongs to my office. I am but one mortal

seeking speech with another mortal—very unhappily so, for your son has done me and mine a great wrong, and I come to ask you to restrain him in its commission.”

“I am grieved and amazed at what you say. I can scarcely credit such an accusation without particulars.”

“I blame you not for that. I will give you the particulars. Last autumn, I met Donald Torquil at sea in some danger. I helped him clear away his wreckage, and brought his boat into Ellerloch Bay. There was every appearance of a stormy night. I offered him the shelter of my home. He came again, and again, and again. I have a daughter, a beautiful girl of eighteen. I need not tell you what he came for. He has outraged my hospitality in the most cruel way.”

“Then, sir, though he be my only son, I say he is a scoundrel; and he shall right the girl he has wronged, or see my face no more.”

“You are going too far, sir. I think my Roberta pure beyond the breath of suspicion;

but he has won her love, weaned her heart from her own life and all its simple duties. He has interfered between our affection, broken our confidence in each other, and made a happy home full of doubts and anxieties and restlessness. She is all I have. He has stolen her from me."

"Oh, this is a different thing, Mr. Balfour. Donald has acted imprudently, but I think your accusation of outraging your hospitality quite too far-fetched—indeed, very unjust. The Torquils are honorable men. When my son is absent I must defend his honor for him."

"What the Torquils have been, I know not. The present Torquils are not honorable men. Your son, the first night of our acquaintance, was well aware a marriage with my daughter was out of all consideration. Yet he did not scruple to seek her affections, though he knew well that I never would permit her to be his wife."

"It seems to me, Mr. Balfour, that you were

as dishonorable as my son. If he knew a marriage with your daughter was impossible, you must have known it also. Why did you allow him to come again and again?"

"Because I knew not who he was."

"Did he visit you under a false name?"

"He told me truly that his name was Donald Torquil, and that he lived sixty miles or more to the southward, in the Kintail district. But what did that signify? I knew no more of the Torquils than I did of the hundreds of other gentlemen in Ross. I saw only a tall, well-made youth, with a bright face, reddish hair and winning manners. I am a Free-Kirk minister. When I read the Scriptures and worshiped with my family, he joined in the worship without protest or remark. I supposed him to be a Protestant. He deceived me at the very first concerning the most sacred of all subjects, between God and man, or man and man."

"Sir, you confess yourself to be an exceeding

bigot. My son behaved only with the toleration of a Christian and a gentleman."

"If it had been only for that once, yes. I would then never have come here with a complaint. He was a traitor to his faith, and to his host, over and over, week after week, month after month, until his object was accomplished ; until my child's life had been made miserable, and the joy and content of my own home destroyed. For the Torquils, being who and what they are, I would pray God to slay my Roberta ere she became one of them."

"The Torquils are gentlemen or their head had not borne so patiently your unwarranted abuse of them in their own castle. It strikes me that it is I and not you who ought to complain in this matter. Whatever may be your opinion of yourself and your office, I can assure you, sir, that Donald Torquil would commit an unpardonable offense against his house and his order and his religion if he married Miss Balfour. I for one, would never speak to him again. I

should never recognize the young woman as my daughter. She would gain nothing socially, as long as I lived, from the marriage."

"You could give her nothing socially. The Balfours have a spotless name in Scotland's history. They will never unite it with one against which tyranny, idolatry, rapine, injustice and cruelty are written."

"Sir! You go too far—much too far! Sir, you will make me forget—" and Sir Rolfe rose hastily and stood glaring at his accuser. He was white^{1011c} with rage, quivering in every limb, but making supreme efforts to control his passion.

"Jacobites! Papists! Robbers of the poor, because they are poor. I will not have my child made a partaker of the curse that will be your inheritance."

Balfour's face was stern, almost fierce, but he spoke with an even, slow intensity, which was unendurable to the nervous, passionate man before him. His answer was a torrent of con-

emptuous reproach and accusation; and his vehement speech brought Fergus—uncalled—into the room. The intrusion was most fortunate. Sir Rolfe's hand had gone more than once to the spot on which his sword had been wont to hang. His whole attitude was that of a man on the point of flinging himself upon his enemy.

But when Fergus came in he looked with a grateful relief toward him and gasped out:

“Show that man—to—the door, Fergus!”

Then, with a low, inarticulate cry, he threw open the oratory, fell at the foot of the cross and clasped the pierced feet of the Christ in his hands with sobs and ejaculations:

“I detest my sins, O Lord! . . . I seek refuge in Thy Mercy! . . . I have sinned exceedingly—through my fault! Through my fault! Through my most grievous fault!”

This act, so unexpected, so amazing, completely silenced and subdued the minister. The living, palpable faith of the Catholic, which

makes his private religion a thing supreme at all hours—a thing of which he never feels ashamed—humbled the angry man. In his own church, in his own household, he prayed readily before all; but he would have been abashed and troubled if Roberta even had seen him at his private devotions. The simple unconsciousness of the spiritual distress he witnessed overcame his anger. He went out of the room like a chidden child.

Fergus followed him down-stairs with dislike and fear, and when they reached the hall he set the door wide open for him. At its threshold David Balfour stood a moment, and then said:

“Tell Sir Rolfe Torquil that I regret the passionate words I spoke; ill words may be true words, but it is better not to give them way.”

“There will pe no ill wordts that will pe true wordts of the Torquil whateffer—no inteet, praise God! And the ill-speaker will pe taking the ill wordts with him, mirover. Yes, and the door will pe shut upon them.”

And then the great doors of Tasmer clashed together with a clamor that set the old spears and shields rattling on the walls, and sent Fergus at a rapid pace to the lighted kitchen, feeling as if an army of dead Torquils were gathering behind him.





CHAPTER XIV.

SARA'S REQUEST.

“Heart with heart, and hand in hand,
Go upon your way;
Pleasant is the promised land
You're entering to-day.
Corn it has and wine,-
Field for work and play,
On it love divine
Sheds benignant ray.”

The statues, the ornaments and the fine furniture of Lady Moidart's drawing-room were all packed away, or carefully shrouded in linen; as were also the great crystal chandeliers; but upon a table lit by temporary hand-lamps, there were spread out gems of wonderful beauty and great price; diamonds and sapphires and pearls of purest tint. Sara Torquil and Andrew

MacLane stood looking at them. Her hand was clasped in his; she leaned her beautiful head against his shoulder; the light of perfectly happy, trustful affection was on both faces.

"Choose which you prefer, dearest, and give me one more pleasure."

"The blue sapphires, the sparkling diamonds, the moonlight pearls, all are lovely, Andrew; but—" and she lifted the string of oriental pearls and looked at them with a wistful admiration.

"But what, Sara?"

"I want a richer betrothal gift than any of these."

No shadow darkened his face; the moment she had spoken the words he comprehended that he should approve them, whatever their meaning.

"It is not gems you want; then what is it, love?"

Then she told him of all the sorrow there was at Torquil, and of Donald's and Father Matthews's letters, and before she had finished

speaking, his clear mind had foreseen her request and granted it.

“You wish me to give the money which we were going to spend on jewels to make new homes for these homeless peasants? That is your desire, Sara?”

“That is my desire, dear Andrew.”

“But I can do both—do both easily; and I shall be glad to do both. Most of them, you say, are Torquils. Any one bearing your name has a claim upon me. I could not see a Torquil homeless, and not help him.”

“But I also want a share in this pleasure. I want to offer these lovely pearls to Divine mercy and charity—to make a thank-offering of them, and so bring God’s smile upon our marriage.”

He drew her closer and kissed her solemnly. He made no further objection. He did not ask her once more to accept them. The confidential clerk, who had brought them in a guarded cab, received them all again, and they sat down

together to talk more fully over the good work they had undertaken.

Sara was enthusiastic in it; Maclane was enthusiastic in giving her pleasure, but he did not disguise the fact that he was only partially on the side of the crofter.

"I feel very sorry for Sir Rolfe," he said, "and this matter must be entirely managed by Father Contach. Even Donald ought not to seem by interference to imply disapproval of Sir Rolfe's plans. For, indeed, Sara, there are very few Englishmen who would blame him. If it were necessary for my solvency to shut my works and mills, I am sure I should do so. Upward of two thousand people might be made homeless by the act, and I should deeply regret it, but I should still think it was my duty to save my credit and my estate. In another way, this is your father's position. There is a romantic sentiment, a historical tie behind it, which makes the position harder for both ; but upon the whole, Sara, my sympathies are mostly with Sir Rolfe."

“You think the people wrong?”

“No, I do not. This is a case in which Sir Rolfe is right and the people not wrong. The situation is altogether out of tune with the time. And the moral effect upon Sir Rolfe is far more trying than it is on the peasant; for when a man is called cruel and unjust, it is difficult for him not to become so. However, dear Sara, how can we ask a blessing upon our own home better than by giving homes to those who are homeless — ‘the blessing of those ready to perish’ is not to be despised.”

This conversation indicates very well the one which followed it with Father Matthew. Mr. Maclane was anxious to be unknown in the matter; but it was his money which brought the ship into Torquil harbor, which provided all necessities for a comfortable voyage to North Carolina, which placed in the hand of every provider a sum sufficient to lift care from their hearts and to give them courage to face the future.

Sir Rolfe had no anger toward the outcasts,

and they had very speedily forgiven him. After all he was the Torquil. The feudal feeling still lingered in the hearts. Most of the men went up to Tasmer to shake his hand; not a few of the elder ones wept as they affectionately bowed their lips to it. Sir Rolfe felt his own eyes grow dim, for the mysterious power in the tie of blood is not to be put away; and when old Hector Torquil sobbed out: "My chief, my chief, farewell!" he took his gold snuff-box and put it into his hand, saying:

"It has my name and crest upon it, Hector. You are the oldest living Torquil; you must be the leader of the people in the new land. Let them do nothing to shame the name. We part now. We shall meet again—beyond the grave."

Maclane was present at this interview, and he watched the scene with many complex feelings. In spite of his great age, Hector was a fine old man, with the erect, up-head carriage of an old soldier. When he had gone away, Sir Rolfe said:

"He was a grand man with a bayonet. I saw

him in ten engagements. He was forty years in the army. Ross used to be the great recruiting ground. When I got my commission, I was followed by sixty strapping fellows from these very hills. No one will now take the queen's shilling. Their military spirit is dead."

"I do not wonder at it, Sir Rolfe. Hector Torquil, you say, fought the battles of his country for forty years; and at the end, what has he for his patriotism? A tent in the churchyard, or exile to America. The feudal feeling that made sixty strapping fellows follow you to the army is nearly destroyed; and beside, these people feel themselves to have been unjustly and cruelly treated. They may be wrong, or they may be right, but the feeling exists; and wherever it does exist, it kills enthusiasm on any other subject. I am not blaming you for it, Sir Rolfe—not in the least. Your order have determined upon a certain course for their own preservation; you must go with them, or go to ruin."

"It is the truth."



CHAPTER XV.

TASMER'S SUMMER.

It was a great relief when the ship, with the little colony on board her, sailed. She went in the night; went so silently that very few knew when she lifted her anchor. Father Matthew had heard their solemn confession, and said prayers for their safety before they embarked. He had gone on board in the evening, and gathered them on deck, and read the vesper service, and sung a hymn with them, and given all his blessing. They knew not, however, that they would see his face no more. If there were such a thought in any heart, no one liked to whisper it; and their last memory of him was brightened by the smile with which he lifted his face to the

ship from the small boat carrying him back to the shore.

Donald took a more active interest in the event than Sir Rolfe. He was in many respects Father Matthews's right hand concerning the innumerable details of so large an immigration. A feeling of great kindness and of sympathy, unspoken but understood, was between the clan and himself, and their parting was not embittered by any misunderstanding or wrong judgment of each other. In the farewell service on board, Donald joined them. Their last act had been to pray together and to clasp each other's hands. In the morning, when he looked over the bay, the ship was gone, the people had vanished from sight forever. He was thankful that the separation had been made at last so kindly; so much better than he had dared to think it would be.

It gave him courage to hope that his own immediate affairs would be settled for him as favorably; though where Roberta was con-

cerned, the whole horizon seemed dark to him. His last interview with her had been during Mr. Balfour's visit to Sir Rolfe Torquil. Roberta suspected the motive of her father's journey; and Donald remembered the strange yet familiar craft he had passed at the entrance to Torquil Harbor. To the lovers, it was evident Mr. Balfour intended to secure Sir Rolfe's co-operation in order to finally separate them. They were carried away with love and sorrow. They vowed to stand by each other unto death.

Under such circumstances their love assumed an exaggerated importance. Being the one end and aim of their own lives, they fell into the error of imagining that it was equally momentous to every one else. There is a luxury of grief which love frequently delights in. Donald and Roberta, who found the world in each other, found, also, some strange, sorrowful satisfaction in believing the whole world was against them. Donald spent nearly two days at Ellerloch, and during this time won a promise from

Roberta to marry him so soon as he got his commission.

The thought of military life was not unpleasant to her. After the stillness of Ellerloch, its stir and change filled her with pleasant anticipations. She knew that her father was expecting a call from a church in the vicinity of Edinburg, and she believed that he had sought it for the express purpose of separating her from Donald. If she did leave him, he would have once more the society and friendship of the scholars and divines whom he loved and honored. She did not doubt but he would forgive her, as soon as he realized she had taken an irrevocable step; and she lulled her conscience to rest with all the specious arguments that love-sick, disobedient daughters have ever been accustomed to use.

So Donald felt more at ease. However restrained his intercourse with Roberta might be during the summer months, he would surely be able to marry her in the autumn. Roberta had not been used to a luxurious life. Upon his pay

they could live comfortably, if Sir Rolfe cut off his allowance, which he admitted was a very likely result. He thought, as so many have foolishly thought, that the world would be well lost for love; that Roberta would be better and more than father and honor and family and money and prestige and social respect and domestic comfort. Roberta and he were to be happy under circumstances which had been always fatal to the happiness of others. No one had ever loved as they loved; no one, therefore, had ever given the world well lost for love a trial before. Roberta thought just as Donald thought. They were living a romance of their own making, and finding even in its contradictions and sorrows and oppositions a happiness of their own.

Roberta watched her father with much interest and curiosity when he returned from his visit to Sir Rolfe. She could not understand him. He made no allusion to Donald. He seemed to relax his covert, continued watch-

fulness of her. In fact, the minister was somewhat astonished at himself. That passionate appeal of his enemy to the Christ upon the cross had given him a moral stupefaction; that partial glimpse of the large, white, shadowy crucifix, that utter self-humiliation of the proud nobleman at its foot, that passionately penitent cry, "My fault! My fault!" was incomprehensible to him. What vital sorrow possessed this man? He knew that he himself would have died rather than have made such a confession before any mortal. The scene and the words haunted him continually. He did not feel satisfied with his own behavior. He had been even more intemperate than the man he looked upon as little better than an idolater. He had had an opportunity to be Christlike, and he had been anything but Christlike, and in his heart there was the same bitter though unvoiced confession, "My fault! My fault! My most grievous fault!"

But the feeling of penitence wears away more

quickly than the feeling of anger. He began to think that Sir Rolfe must have had some intention of injuring him, and that his extravagant contrition arose from a sudden realization of the sin and its consequences. From this point it was easy to regain his satisfaction with himself, and his dislike for, and his displeasure at, Sir Rolfe Torquil. Then the next step was to express it. One day Roberta went out early in the afternoon and did not return for some hours. He had seen her leave in the boat and had watched her tacking about the bay for some time. Suddenly the boat had disappeared round a rocky point, and he had been tormented with the idea that Donald's boat was also at anchor in the smooth water behind its shelter. He accused Roberta, and defamed the Torquils with an intemperate anger, and as it happened the idea was entirely false. She had merely found a favorable wind going, and an unfavorable one returning, and she was able indignantly and positively to deny the accusation.

But the idea suggested was one more easy to carry out than any the lovers had hitherto hit upon, and Balfour having once wrongfully blamed his child, was ever afterward sensitively afraid of doing her a similar injustice. So Roberta, who had been always fond of the sea, almost lived upon it during the ensuing summer. Frequently she was accompanied by her father, more frequently she went alone, or took with her one of Rosa Mackenzie's boys. She developed a taste for shells and sea-weeds, and came home after every excursion with some sea treasure. And Balfour was glad to encourage any new interest in her life. He sent to Edinburgh for books and glasses, and encouraged her by a sympathy born entirely of his desire to atone for the loss of her lover.

His visit to Sir Rolfe had really done no good. That nobleman, though he made a special religious exercise of forgiving the epithets that had been applied to him, was not able to think kindly of the minister. He had been put by him

in a mighty temptation, and but for the warning entrance of Fergus would probably have slain Balfour; for his hand was on the poniard, which his long residence in India had taught him to wear concealed, and he had dropped the restraining beads from his fingers and was feeling for its hilt. The face of Fergus revealed to him the danger he was in; for one whole year of his life had been spent in the shadow and horror of a probable atonement for precisely such a satisfaction of passion. Soon after entering the army he had quarreled with a civilian about a trivial matter, and with his dirk avenged the fancied insult so fiercely that his victim lay for months between life and death, and he, within the limits of his parole, waited in fear the recovery which would give him freedom, or the death for which he would have to atone.

The lesson had been a terrible one, and yet he had permitted himself to be driven to the very verge of learning it again—all his vows for the moment forgotten—all the restraints of years

burst asunder for a little angry breath. Fergus understood that passionate imploration at the Christ's feet; although it always remained a mystery to Balfour—one which he could only explain to himself by a half-contemptuous allusion to the emotional tendencies of the Catholic creed.

But though this emotion did not sway the angry man an hour after Balfour's departure, it left some traces behind whose influence was much more permanent. Sir Rolfe, though he thought it a religious duty to forgive the scornful, contemptuous words which had so irritated him, did not forgive the man who spoke them. In his heart he separated the sin and the sinner, and he found it easier to pardon the sin than to tolerate the sinner. He was conscious of a desire to annoy him, and if he could do so by simply not interfering with Donald, he found it a method which it was easy to excuse to his own conscience. So the minister had really done harm to his own cause by the visit; for Sir Rolfe

had quite recovered himself before Donald's return, and was able to treat the subject with one of those polite innuendoes about women which some men consider complimentary to themselves.

But, in spite of much said to the contrary, there really are pure-hearted young men; men who reverence good womanhood, and who know nothing of sinful women, and hardly believe in their existence. Donald was such a youth. The dim memories of his mother, his intimate knowledge of his sister Sara, his adoration of Roberta, constituted the basis upon which his opinion of womanhood was based. He repelled with an instinctive anger anything which lowered this estimate. He had known no bad women, and he simply did not believe in them. When Sir Rolfe smilingly tolerated "some love affair he had heard of toward Ellerloch," as one of those passing *liaisons* which are supposed somehow to be conducive to the ripening of a young man's character, Donald indignantly refused to have

any derogatory word used in reference to the object of his affection.

"I hope I am a gentleman, father," he answered, with a flushing face. "I should scorn to love a woman whom I did not think worthy to be my wife. As to Miss Balfour—"

"Spare me, I entreat you, Donald, all explanations. I wish to know nothing of the young lady. If she 'adds a passing glory to your youth,' I am obliged to her."

"But, sir—"

"No, indeed! I will not discuss a boy's first love affair. You will have forgotten it yourself a year hence. A much more important circumstance is your sister's marriage. Sara has behaved splendidly. She has fulfilled my highest hopes. She is a good, sensible girl, and I have no doubt will be happy and honorable as long as she lives. In the main, sooner or later, the Torquils do very well to themselves, which is, I hope, no sin."

"I think Sara loves Maclane. I am sure he is

a very lovable man. I do not think Sara is marrying in order to do well to herself."

"You know nothing of women, Donald. To get on in the world—that is the one thing needful to them. But let this subject pass. I was going to say that I shall have all arrangements made for you to join the Seaforth Highlanders in the autumn. So make the most of your holiday now. Take all the joy of your youth, Donald. There is only one May in life. But take care not to make promises or court acquaintances which will embarrass your future life. Now I must dismiss you, for I have many letters to write, and I expect Sara and Maclane within a week."

Thus he tided over and put off any serious explanation on Donald's part. He really wanted to know nothing as to the progress of his love affair, for he thought he could very safely trust to the watchfulness and animosity of such a man as Balfour preventing the irrevocable step of marriage. And when Sara returned, he had so many

more vivid interests. She was in herself so charming in her new character. The independence she felt in her assured position gave to her intercourse with her father a delightful repose and familiarity. They talked confidentially together of what was to be done for Donald's progress, and of what was to be done for the future good of Tasmer.

Maclane's sympathy in respect to the clearance of Easter-Torquil also gave Sir Rolfe great comfort. He regained his self-satisfaction. He felt even an admiration for the kind manner in which his clearance had been effected. There had been no necessity for soldiers or even constables on his estate ; and then by some curious mental process, he very soon associated the good ship and the many comforts of the exiles with his own forbearance, until he felt as if all was the special work of his hand and heart.

Upon the whole, it was a delightful summer at Tasmer. There was the pleasant stir of wedding preparations throughout it ; the charming

litter in the family rooms of constantly arriving boxes filled with splendid clothing and other accessories to the bridal. Maclane was coming and going, and his advent was always a new pleasure. The boat built for him by Rory and Angus Mackenzie proved a great success. It was named the *Sara Torquil*, and Sara, dressed in beautiful garments, broke the wine on her bow, and chanted the launch song. The little craft went off splendidly; there was a happy picnicky lunch on board, and Maclane drank his bespoke cup of happiness from a brimming cup—which is a great thing for any mortal to do.

Afterward, Donald and he had many a glorious race down the sound, or up the Minch, when the squalls over Torridon were like to blow the sails to bits, and the wind would fly right up to the north and fetch the sea down till the waves thundered over the bows. And as Rory sailed with Maclane, and Angus with

Donald, the emulation was doubled in each boat.

"For my faather iss the obstinate man whateffer, Maistir Tonalt," Angus would say, with a laugh. "It will pe wild work lifting the poats to wintwardth out of the floodt tide, but my faather, he will pe sailing the mast out of the *Sara Torquil*, pefore he will pe gifing in whateffer. Praise God."

Sometimes Father Matthew went on one boat or the other; more frequently with Maclane, for he was interested in him from a religious point of view. And, though on a sea holiday, the priest had the glad vivacity of boyhood, and could sing a boat-song or reef a sail, or handle an oar with any man. He knew well also how to take advantage of those still nights when they drifted peacefully over moonlit seas. Then soul spoke to soul of the solemn things pertaining to its destiny, and they reasoned together until Maclane was almost persuaded of the truths the father so earnestly pleaded. But his desire to

prove spiritual things by earthly methods, to arrive at conviction by logical sequences, hindered him much.

"You must make a venture," said the father; "faith is a venture before a man is a Christian. It is a grace after it."

"If I could be made certain."

"Ah, my son, certainty is the reward of those who by an act of will embrace the truth!"

"O, for some knowledge of the Divine Being!"

"It has been the longing of all ages. 'O that I knew where I might find Him!' cried Job. 'Show us the Father and it sufficeth us,' was the supplication of the disciples. It is the ceaseless, passionate longing of all heaven-born souls; but though there is no open vision in these days, His presence is ever near to the believer."

Maclane looked with a pious admiration at this fervent Christian. His calm manner and sweet voice told of a habitual communion with God, and his eyes were full of what Bossuet

calls "an incomparable joy"—a joy which none can taste but those who taste it unmixed and alone. And such conversations were not without their influence; the priest felt that Maclane could not linger long outside the gate; Christ Himself would speak the "*compelle intrare*."

In August Sara and Maclane were married. The castle was full of company. Over the gray old walls the flag of the Torquils, with its fiery torch and crossed claymores, blew north and south, as it had not blown for many a generation. Inside, there was a light laughter of merry girls and happy matrons, and all the delightful confusion which follows a crowd of idle, pleasure-seeking men, whose talk is of sporting and boating and beautiful women. Most of the company had brought with them their own maids and valets; there was, therefore, a second and by no means an unimportant party below the main one. Elegant valets, with suave manners and light-footed as cats, and spruce, jaunty ladies' maids were continually passing up and down the

stairs and along the corridors, leaving behind them an echo of carefully modulated badinage and a flutter of many-colored ribbons.

In the midst of all Sir Rolfe and his handsome son and daughter made a very distinct impression. They were of the gay world, and yet in a great measure not of it. Sara and Donald were so fresh and unstained by it, and the old colonel brought into its light atmosphere just so much of the military atmosphere as added a grave yet gracious dignity to the most frivolous amusements.

To the marriage ceremony every Highland gentleman and lady in the Kintail district had been bidden ; and the old church of the crusader was crowded with life and beauty. But among all the women there Sara Torquil was the loveliest. The red-brown of her hair, the deep blue of her eyes, her fine color, her tall figure clothed in glistening satin, gave her a starry look, which may be felt or might be painted, but which eludes words. "Such a handsome couple!"

"Such a suitable match!" "Such a fortunate woman!" "Such a happy man!" These and many other similar exclamations summed up the success of Sara Torquil and Andrew Maclane's marriage-day.

They left Tasmer for Sarum Court immediately, but most of the guests remained for longer or shorter periods. Indeed, it was nearly a month ere the last party reluctantly left the coverts and the tempting hills, for the heather was in its finest purple and the birds in splendid feather. As for Donald, he had thoroughly enjoyed the festival time. A man may be in love, but he is not made insensible to fine company and life that is rapid and vivid by that condition. And yet he was glad when it was over. Military service meant a home and Roberta, and from these two central thoughts he had planned out an existence full of the sweetest and purest possibilities. Only ideals, perhaps, but it is upon ideals the noblest hunger of the soul is satisfied.



CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE TROUGH OF THE SEA.

“His hands are clasped and raised,
In the conflict dread ;
His passionate gaze is on the cross
Above his head ;
And scarce more worn and sad
That awful face,
That leans in the heaviness of death
From its high place,
Than the wasted face upturned to plead
For strength and grace.”

Near the end of September, Donald Torquill was gazetted to a company in the Seaforth Highlanders.

“When I received my commission,” said Sir Rolfe, “I said the votive mass for it, with the

Tasmer beads in my hands, Donald. Arrange with Father Matthew the time, and make your thanksgiving and vows over them."

"I am glad to be reminded of such a good custom."

"How many prayers have they reckoned! How many sacred promises have they recorded. They have been wet with the tears of the penitent and the sorrowful; they have been hallowed with the last kisses of the dying. The vows made upon them cannot be broken without sin. Be careful, then, of the words you say, Donald."

It was to Father Matthew that Donald went with the joyful news first.

"I am Captain Torquil now, Father, and feel my heart glow with military enthusiasm. The Torquils may like this or that for a little while, but they are all born soldiers."

"Man is a military animal, Donald, and he loves fighting and parade."

"But it is not wrong, Father?"

"This is a militant state, Donald. Have you never thought of Holy Church as a mailed warrior? The light of her drawn sword has illumined the world. I am glad you have remembered to make an offering first to Heaven of your success and your hopes. If God wills, may He bless you!"

"I am very happy; and yet Fergus has cast a little shadow on me, though he did not mean to do so, I am sure. When he saw me first this morning, he did not know that I had been gazetted, yet he said to me: 'I have had a dream, and read it if you can; for I think you will never be a soldier at all.' It was in the gray dawn, he said, and he saw me draw my sword, and a hand—a woman's hand, white and thin as a shadow—touched the hilt, and the sword fell to the ground; and he woke, wet with the sweat of mortal terror. I laughed when Fergus told me, but the dream has troubled me."

"Let not your heart be troubled, Donald. Commit your way unto the Lord; then, what-

ever happens, it will be right. Listen to what our own saint, the angelic Columba has to say. This very morning I was reading the song he wrote, as he journeyed from Tara. It has the piety of a psalm of David, and the grand, musical march of a chorus of Sophocles :

“ ‘ Alone on the mountains, I need the help of God only.

“ ‘ This shall shield me better than a guard of six thousand warriors, for not even these could avail me aught if the hour appointed for my death had come.

“ ‘ The reprobate perish even within the sanctuary ; the elect of God is preserved even in the fore-front of the battle.

“ ‘ Let God order my life as it please Him. Nothing can be taken from it or added to it.

“ ‘ Each man must fulfill his own lot. The thing which he sees vanishes from his grasp ; the thing which he sees not comes upon him.

“ ‘ It is not a sign nor an omen which can fix the period of life. Our trust is in One who is mightier.

“ ‘ I care not for the voices of birds or the casting of lots. My Druid is Christ the Son of God. My kingdom is that of the King of Kings ; and I dwell with my brethren at Kells and at Moone.’ ”


“ It is a joyful, trustful song, Father.”

“I have always loved Saint Columba. I can see him, tall and strong and beautiful, lifting the cross among the barbaric Picts; I can see him standing by the side of King Brude on the walls of Craig Phadric, confounding the Druids, as Moses confounded the Egyptian magicians. I can see him preaching in Iona, and sitting among councilors at Drumceath, and I can see him dying in the ecstasy of a vision of angels. Do you remember, Donald, that this is the Feast of St. Michael? Let us implore the protection and favor of the angelic warrior for you.”

Yet, though Donald went from Father Con-tach full of the purest and highest enthusiasm, there was in his heart a faint sigh of some coming doom—he knew not what. Even the saint’s triumphant song had left an echo of the uncertain and the unforeseen :

“The thing which he sees vanishes from his grasp; the thing which he sees not comes upon him.”

He wished he had not heard the words; they





HER FACE, WHITE AS DEATH, LAY AGAINST THE BLACK BILLOWS.—See Page 200.

had fastened themselves in his heart like an arrow.

He went next to see Angus. He wanted to go to Ellerloch the following day, and he wanted Angus to go with him. There was then some doubt of the wind and weather, but the next morning was a specially favorable one ; there was the blue above and the blue below ; a good south wind, and a sunshine that went to the very heart of man and nature.

Sir Rolfe saw his son leaving, but he was not inclined to do anything which would interfere with his pleasure. Fergus spoke to him as he was half-way through the court, and Donald turned with a light laugh and answered his question. Never before had his great personal beauty struck his father so forcibly. He looked as happy as a bridegroom, as handsome as a young Greek god, when he lifted his smiling face to the window at which he saw Sir Rolfe standing, and then bared his head in the sunlight as a good-bye to him.

Ellerloch was reached without any adventure or misadventure, and Donald waited the coming of his love. He left Angus with the boat and climbed the rocks to watch for her leaving harbor. Her father was with her that afternoon, and also a little lad from the village, but he saw her land and gather some sea-grass, and he knew she had seen the token of his presence—an oar from the *Sea Bird* standing in the crevice of the cliffs—for when he was not waiting for her the oar also was absent.

There was then a certainty that he would have to wait until the following morning, perhaps afternoon; and Angus and he made themselves as comfortable as possible. They could do a little fishing or gunning, and they had plenty to talk about, for Donald had promised to take Angus to the army with him, and the young fisher was full of anticipations and eager for information.

The next day broke in unusual beauty.

“A pit too pright,” said Angus, doubtfully, at skies that were innocent of shadows or clouds.

In the middle of the forenoon Donald saw Roberta's boat tacking for the well-known covert.

"My father has gone to a farm six miles away," she said, happily, "and we can have a long day together, Donald;" and she then made Angus lift from her boat a basket containing delicacies of various kinds for their dinner.

Never was there a meal spread and eaten in such a joyful mood. It was laid upon the sea-shore, and the table was a large, flat rock, and their seats the dry, warm sands covered with plaids; and Angus boiled the kettle and waited upon the lovers with kindly service, too delicate to hinder confidence, and yet sufficient for every need.

After the meal was over he climbed the cliffs and watched the horizon. It might be the minister would get home before Roberta and come out to meet her, or the weather might turn unfavorable, for sudden change was the rule on the Minch; and though Roberta had

but a short sail, if change was coming it would be well to warn her in time.

So quickly went the happy hours away ! At last, at last there was daybreak in their east. Donald had got his commission. He was going to Edinburg in three days. If Mr. Balfour accepted the call given him he would leave in a month. They looked upon this call as a really providential arrangement on their behalf, and Roberta was certain that he would be accepted, unless her father heard of Donald's appointment, which was very unlikely. So the foolish couple, in the selfishness of their satisfaction, not only forgot every other love and every other duty, but with a forwardness of personality that was sinful in all its elements supposed things of essentially more importance to be subservient to their desires.

But they were unconscious of any inconsistency. It seemed right enough to their longing hearts that the plans of every other mortal should serve their plans; that two fathers should

be wronged and slighted that they might have satisfaction; that two homes should be filled with sorrow that they might build their home upon the ruins. They were the world to each other, and they had no consciousness of obligations outside their own small orbit.

So that afternoon, the sun shone for them only, and the sea murmured softly with little treble sounds against the boats and among the pebbles for them. They congratulated themselves on the necessity which had taken Mr. Balfour from home so opportunely; they made pleasant reflections upon the deacons of that St. Andrew's Free Kirk whose call was likely to be so propitious to their plans. And in all this there was nothing of malice, nothing of active unkindness to others. It was the sin of thoughtlessness; the sin which we are so apt to count venial, but which is, nevertheless, the great sin of social life—the unconsidered rock which wrecks far more happiness than any storm of open enmity, or open wrong.

"The minutes go too quickly! The minutes go too quickly, Roberta!" sighed Donald. "But oh! when all of them will be our own!"

And as they paced the brown-ribbed sands, hand in hand together, Roberta leaned her handsome head against his shoulder, and Donald thought himself, among all the sons of men that day, the very happiest.

Suddenly Angus called to them from the rocks, and with eager motions he directed them to the boats. There was no craft in sight; there was no apparent change in the wind. But Angus had the prescience of a west-coast fisher, or a sea-bird. He saw the storm afar off. He urged the lovers to make haste in their preparations. He was almost cross at the laughter and delay with which Roberta arranged her basket and made her adieu.

"With this wind I shall be home in twenty minutes," she said, as Donald lifted her into the light sail-boat with whispered love words, and one long good-bye kiss.

“We hadt petter pe following her,” said Angus; “there hass peen time lost, there hass peen too much time lost—you will see that, sir, ferry soon; yes, inteet!”

“What do you mean, Angus?”

Angus was busy lifting the anchor of the *Sea Bird*.

“You will pe seeing what I mean, sir; there is a squall to the north, it will be here ferry soon—perhaps it may make away to the Skye shore—put Miss Palfour’s poat iss a small poat, and it will pe like a feather in the plast if it will pe coming this way—and it iss coming—and it iss coming, sir! Look! Look to the north way!”

“Up with the sails, Angus! We must keep in Miss Balfour’s wake. Hurry! We may be too late!”

Even while he was speaking the wind was veering and changing, and in a few minutes it was coming down with a roar that drowned speech; then the sky grew black, and there was a woeful moan in the waters beneath it.

Angus, who could do anything that mortal man could do with a boat, managed to keep Roberta in sight. She handled her little craft with wonderful skill, and in spite of the fierce blast was managing to tack for the harbor. Several men were on the pier watching her. There was a stir among them as if they were going to launch a boat and go to her assistance. Donald stood at the bow of the *Sea Bird* like a man distraught; one moment crying out to Roberta, the next urging Angus to impossibilities.

At length she was at the bend of the bar. If she could pass it, she would be in smooth water. A boat manned with six oars was flying toward her; Donald could see the minister's form among them. It was life or death for Roberta to weather that perilous turn. Angus kept his eyes fixed upon her. Donald stood with parted lips and clasped hands, enduring an unspeakable anguish. And Roberta tacked for the turn with a desperate skill; but the sea suddenly came down like great Bens rolling over each other

in fury, and the poor girl evidently lost confidence and became terrified. She abandoned the helm, and, with great effort, reached the slender mast, to which she clung. Donald was near enough to distinguish through the murk of the storm her white face turned toward him.

He called to her with passionate strength, but his voice was carried away on the great wind blowing it southward. If she could only hold out five minutes longer! If she could only tack so as to get over the bar! If love could only work a miracle for her salvation! Alas! Alas! While every eye was turned upon her, while every heart was praying for her, a tremendous wave went over the boat, as if there was no boat there.

A cry of mortal agony blent itself with the shrieking wind. It came from the miserable Donald. He was standing at the stern of the boat, when the billows went over Roberta. The next moment, the slender mast, with the poor girl clinging to it, was tossed into the trough of

the waves. The swell brought her close to him. Her face, white as death, lay against the black billows, and Donald saw no other thing between heaven and earth. With a loud cry of "*Roberta! Roberta!*" with the swift plunge and unerring aim of a sea-bird, he leaped into the raging water.





CHAPTER XVII.

FAREWELL, LOVE.

“ Yes, love, indeed, is light from heaven ;
A spark of that immortal fire
With angels shared ; by Allah given,
To lift from earth our low desire,
Devotion wafts the mind above,
But heaven itself descends in love ;
A ray of Him who formed the whole,
A glory circling round the soul.”

“ Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne’er been broken-hearted.”

There are moments in the life of most men when the spirit takes possession of the flesh and defies its limitations ; when it dares the elements, and subdues them ; when it faces death,

and is triumphant over it. It was in the might of such a moment Donald made his perilous leap to save his beloved, or to die with her. He had calculated with more than mortal prescience the exact moment and the exact space. As he struck the water, his hand grasped the floating spar.

But Roberta was almost beyond consciousness. To his passionate outcry of love and hope, there was but the faintest flicker of intelligence. He fancied a quiver in the closed eyelids ; that was all. Her hold upon the mast was the mechanical hold of a death-grasp. She knew nothing ; but Donald's mind had a supernatural clearness. He understood in a moment that no mortal might make his way on those mountain-tops and in those valleys of watery death, and he looked consciously toward the rocky beach, where the set of the tide must carry them. To abandon themselves to this 'set' was their only hope. Some wave mightier than all others might lift

them above the rocks, which kept the perilous path to the land.

These thoughts were vivid and rapid as a flash of lightning. With one arm he grasped Roberta; with the other, the sustaining spar. He turned her dear white face to his own breast. It was likely that their bodies would be cut and bruised upon the jagged rocks; but, if possible, he would save from ruin the loveliness of his Roberta's countenance. His own breast should be its shield.

For a moment or two, they oscillated on the mighty under-swell between waves; then a motion, tremendous as the upheaval of a world, made Donald aware that the fatal wave was coming. He clasped Roberta closer, and with the great name of "*God*" upon his lips, surrendered himself and the being dearer than himself to the mountainous rush of water—to the blinding spray—to the cruel rocks.

He knew no more.

His movements, however, had been appre-

hended by the crowd of watching fishermen, and at their utmost speed, a party made for the exact point where the bodies were likely to be cast. Their intimate knowledge of the power and the set of the tidal currents directed them with a marvelous accuracy. Five minutes after the sea had cast them upon the rocky coast, Roberta's father lifted her tenderly in his arms.

"There is still life here!" he cried. "There is still life here!" And, with a wonderful rapidity, the fishers made a litter of the minister's plaid, and carried the girl to her home.

Yet even in moments so precious, with the sense of wrong burning in his heart, David Balfour did not forget to care for his enemy. He had seen Donald's leap into the storm; he knew that if Roberta was saved, she owed her life to Donald's love and courage; and bitterly as he reproached the young man in his mind, he could not but admire his devotion, and pity his young life lost. For Donald lay among the rocks, bleeding from many a wound, and the arm which

had encompassed Roberta had been broken ere it surrendered its treasure. His eyes were wide open, but quite unconscious. He was dead in every sense ; he was stunned in every limb.

The minister turned from the piteous sight with full eyes, and ere he hastened home with his own child, said :

“ Peter Mackenzie, I leave young Torquil with you. Do your duty for him to the last moment, and if I—”

“ There iss no neet to be telling me to do my duty to the Torquil, Minister. It iss to my own cottage I will pe takin’ him. Yes, inteet, thank God.”

Fortunately for Donald, both Peter and his wife were skilled in every means by which the drowned are brought back to life ; and in an hour’s time Donald’s soul had been reluctantly called back to the clay tenement where sore suffering awaited it. For, though the heart resumed its regular action and the lungs again breathed the breath of life, Donald remained

unconscious, and it was evident that he had suffered some very severe internal injury.

"It iss a fight in the teeth of death he will pe hafing," said Rosa, as she watched the young man tossing and moaning through the dreadful night.

Early in the morning Angus opened the door of the cabin. He had managed to bring the *Sea Bird* into harbor with the tide, and had easily learned where to look for his young master.

"He iss ferry ill, Rosa, and why then were you not going for the minister? The minister iss as goot, yes, and petter, than any doctor at aal."

"You will pe talking ferry foolish things, Angus Torquil. The minister iss a goot man but he iss shust a man, and that iss aal. It wouldt pe takin' God Almighty himself, to pe helping the man who hat drowndt your only childt. Yes, inteet!"

"Go for the minister, Rosa. It will pe hiss duty. It will pe pehafing like a Christian."

"There iss times when a man will not want to pehafe like a Christian. I will not pe asking the minister to pe safing the life of his enemy."

"Ferry well, then, it iss pack to Torquil we will pe going; and you will pe going with us, mirover, for you are a Torquil and plood-kin to Maister Tonalt, and hiss life will pe in your hands, Rosa."

To this proposition, Rosa willingly agreed, and without any delay the *Sea Bird* sailed southward. A sad voyage it was, although the wind was fair and the skies bright. For Donald lay bound in that land of awful shadows, which we call delirium, and the tragedy of Roberta's struggle for life was ever before him. He went over and over it. Night and day he was watching the girl's hard, brave fight with boisterous winds and mountainous waves, her pitiful abandonment of hope, her sudden disappearance, when all the waves and billows went over her.

Terrible hours were spent in that little cabin on the lonely ocean; and both Angus and Rosa were worn out when the *Sea Bird* cast her anchor in Torquil Bay, at the gray dawn of the second morning.

At the same moment the Master of Tasmer was kneeling in the oratory, with the old ivory beads in his hand. It was his custom, at the first brightening of the night shadows, to follow the advice of the wisest of men: "To prevent the sun, to give God thanks, and at the dayspring pray unto Him."* He had risen with a cheerful alacrity for the purpose, for his devotion was a delight to him. It was no lip service; he really loved and adored the great Being before whom he prostrated himself; asking with a cheerful and devout confidence:

"Give me grace, O Lord, to do what Thou commandest, and command what Thou plearest.

"Give me grace to suffer what Thou permittest, and permit what Thou plearest."

* Wisdom of Solomon. XVI.: 28.

Then full of peace he went into his own room, and stood some minutes looking out over the sea. Suddenly he was aware of the feet of men in regular steps, and his heart grew apprehensive and heavy as lead. He opened the casement with trembling hands, and leaned forward to see the sorrow that was coming.

Four strong fishers were carrying a mattress on which his son lay bound. His face was like clay, his eyes closed, he uttered heart-rending cries of hopeless agony. Sir Rolfe went down to meet him. Silently he led the way to Donald's room; and so they carried the young lord to the chamber he had left a few days before, in all the beauty and radiant expectancy of love and hope.

Every dwelling is subject to the visits of some terrible guests—guests that lift the latch and enter in, and ask no man's leave to do so. In Tasmer's old rooms, pain and death sat waiting. The sorrow of the day was answered by the sorrow of the night; and human nature and

earthly love would alike have failed, had not the Christ, clothed in eternal patience, been also there, waiting the hour of need. For it was spring again before Donald Torquil escaped from the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

The news of their brother's danger reached Sara and Maclane in Rome, and they immediately returned to Tasmer, where they found Sir Rolfe and Father Contach almost exhausted with their vigil, and their efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the sick man. But Sara brought with her two Sisters of Charity, and the advent of these gentle ministering souls introduced some comfort and order into the worn-out household. But withal they were sorrowful weeks, full of days in which love watched breathlessly the struggle for life, in which the Angel of Death was sensitively present, and the beating of his wings almost heard by the living.

Donald scarcely wished to live; for he believed Roberta dead. No one spoke her name, and he was himself unable to form the question his soul

constantly longed to ask. But though she had vanished from this planet, she must be somewhere in the universe of God. His soul followed hard after her. He tugged at his mortal bands, as a prisoner at the cords that bind him. "Let me go to her! Wherever she may be, merciful God, let me go to her!" was the voiceless but constant imploration of his heart.

One night he awoke from a long, long, troubled sleep. He was out of pain. He was clearly conscious, he was full of rest, though too weak to lift a finger. His room seemed strange to him. The tables were crowded with all the paraphernalia of severe sickness, and his own special furniture had been pushed aside to make space for large chairs and lounges, suitable for the relief of those who were worn out with watching.

In one of these chairs a Sister sat musing and praying. Her face was like a holy book. She was so still and calm, that the slight movement of her fingers as they passed along the rosary was noticeable. Donald derived a strange content in

watching her. It was like a dream of heaven, after his long anguish of delirium, and he feared to see it fade away.

In a little while she rose and came to his side.

"You were praying for me?" whispered Donald, with a great effort.

"I was praying for you and Roberta."

Her voice was sweet and low; her words were like the words of an angel to him. He cried out, as an infant might cry, weak and shrill; and he looked at her with such imploring eyes that she understood him without speech.

"Roberta, also, has been very ill; but she has recovered. I was praying for her soul."

He could not answer. That one short, shrill cry had exhausted his strength; but large tears of joy gathered in his hollow eyes; and the gentle Sister dried them, and with holy, hopeful words soothed him to sleep again.

During his illness Sir Rolfe had watched his son with a real sympathy. He was glad that about Roberta they had no hard words and no

unkind feelings. From Angus he had heard the whole tragical story, and his soul was full of pity for the young girl who had so nearly lost her life for love of his son. It was true that she had been in the way of disobedience, and therefore in the way of sin; that she had deliberately chosen her own pleasure, though she had to tear it secretly through forbidden gates. But he remembered her youth, and he understood what a temptation a bright, handsome, adoring lover like Donald must have been. Indeed, there were hours when Donald lay on the very shoals and sands of Time, in which he assured himself that *he* would have been reasonable about the marriage, and that the tragedy was mainly due to the proud, impracticable bigotry of Minister Balfour.

He hoped, indeed, that the love of Donald and Roberta would not survive the suffering it had caused them. He knew how often men found out, through burning fever and bodily pain and weakness, that their passion was but the over-

flow of youth's impetuosity and emotion, and he quite expected that his son would be cured of his sickness and his love at the same time.

Possibly he might have been right, had Donald's love for Roberta been simply the desire of a young man for physical beauty. But when love finds the soul of the beloved, then it is an affection antedating this life, and holding the promise of eternity. Truly Donald admired Roberta's personal loveliness; he felt the great charm of her fresh vitality, her splendid coloring and her graceful movements; but, after all, it was *Roberta's soul* he loved—the soul that looked through her loving eyes into his soul—the soul that drew like a magnet all the sweetness of his own soul—the soul that gave to her simplest words hidden meanings—sweet, vague memories—that stirred in him feelings for which he had no name; illimitable stretching backward and forward, recalling, promising, binding him with a thousand airy bonds, sweeter than life, stronger than death, not to be broken and not to be for-

gotten. While Roberta lived Donald knew that he must love her. Though she went to the uttermost parts of the earth, he must follow her.

One day at the close of March, Donald came up from the village with a letter in his hand and the strength of some sure purpose in his face. He met the baron in the fir-wood, and he answered the questioning glance at the letter without hesitation.

"It regards my company, father. The furlough granted on account of sickness is nearly expired. I must resign or join my regiment. It is ordered to Canada."

"Decide your own fate, Donald. We have grown very close to each other during this sad winter, and I shall be sorry to lose your companionship. I have ceased to expect your co-operation in the improvements I am making on Tasmer. I know that your disapproval of them is beyond reasoning with."

"Have I said anything to offend you, father?"

"You have given me no intentional offense."

Then Donald remembered that Sara had told him how passionately in his delirious ravings he had lamented the dispersion of their sept. "Our father often turned white to his very lips." "He was unable to bear your supplications and your reproaches." "He felt that you had thought in your sanest hours all that you muttered and cried in your unconscious state." So much Sara had said, and Donald understood that the baron had resigned all hope of his sympathy. He glanced at the pale, thoughtful man by his side, and a sentiment of regret filled his heart. He wished that he could have taken his father's hand and said: "In all things pertaining to Tasmer we will stand shoulder to shoulder, sir." But Donald's opinion of the "clearance" was still the same. He regarded it as a movement at once unjust and unkind, and of very doubtful advantage to the barony of Tasmer.

"I think I had better join my company, father. And it is my duty to tell you that Miss

Balfour has a right to be consulted. I thought of going to Ellerloch to-morrow. Angus will manage the boat."

Sir Rolfe stood still and looked reproachfully at his son.

"You intend really to take again a road that has nearly cost you your life? Does your infatuation for that girl still rule you?"

"It is not an infatuation, sir. It is love, holy and strong. She promised to marry me when I got my commission. I trust that she will still be ready to keep her promise."

Then Sir Rolfe, with a haughty movement of dismissal to his son, walked forward without another word; and Donald was sensible of a sudden moral shock and a quick physical faintness. He leaned against one of the great fir-trees and lifted his bonnet and let the fresh March wind blow across his hot brow. He was still so weak that the sensation of anger which first assailed him made him tremble. He had proved by such long and severe suffering his

love for Roberta Balfour that he felt that he had, at least, a right to have that love recognized. A sense of injustice made him resent his father's prejudice; a sense of honor made him impatient of any longer delay as regarded Roberta. Angus thought it possible to take the boat to Ellerloch, and he believed himself able to take the journey.

During the weeks of his convalescence there had been such a pleasant confidence between himself and Sir Rolfe, that he felt keenly his father's relapse into sympathetic silence. Before leaving him for the night he made an effort to break it.

"Dear father," he said, "I must go to Ellerloch to-morrow; do not let me go with your anger. I made a promise to Miss Balfour last September; do you think that my sickness and the lapse of time have absolved me from it?"

"What promise did you make her?"

"I promised to make her my wife."

"Then do so. As a gentleman, you can do no

less. The wrong was in the promise. If it affected only yourself, I should say break it, though you broke your heart, also; but a promise made to a woman who loves you is inviolable. Go to Ellerloch and marry the girl, if you wish, and make much of her love; it will be all that is left you."

"My dear father—"

"If I be dear, where is your obedience?"

He rose with the question, and passed into the oratory; and Donald, trembling with physical weakness and mental trouble, fell upon the nearest couch and shut in the heavy tears behind his closed eyelids, and his clasped hands above them.

In the morning, with the early tide, he started for Ellerloch. Angus came up to the castle for him; and leaning upon his strong arm, Donald walked through the firs and out of their dewy stillness into the keen salt breeze of the gray Minch water-way. The dawn was just edging the gneiss with pinkish, pallid hues, and on the

desolate ancient hills the delicate green of thin grass dyed the tint of the rock. A heavy rain in the night had deadened the breeze, and, as it often does in the Minch, had swung it away round to the southeast.

Donald looked lovingly at the sky and the sea, and the white streaks of foam and the spent swell breaking among the boulders. He bent over the boat's nose, to see how she was rising and falling in the water, and felt quite satisfied with her trend forward. The peace, the lulling, cradling motion, the fresh, life-laden wind, soothed him inexpressibly. He lay down in his sea-blankets at the stern, and idly watching the forlorn headlands and the vapory edges of the fells, he let the swing of the boat lull him into the soundest, sweetest, deepest, longest sleep he had ever known.

Angus had the patience and wisdom of love. He pushed forward the *Sea Bird* and let Donald sleep. Hour after hour passed, and the young man never moved. It was near sunset when he

lifted his head and looked at the old treeless coast, and the black hills lining it. The boat was luffing under them, to keep the failing breeze; and the very sadness of their ragged edges, draped in mist, touched and comforted him. It was the same somber look which charmed the early saints, and girded these solitary headlands with their cells. He looked at them with something of awe in his face, for the *Sea Bird* was rippling their very shadows.

The next day, with a fair wind, they reached Ellerloch in the afternoon, and Donald went at once to David Balfour's house. The little maid-servant let him enter with a frightened look. She said the minister was in the parlor, and as she spoke, softly opened the door.

Balfour was alone. He was sitting by the fire lost in thought. His right hand lay upon his knee, his left upon an open book at his side. When Donald spoke, he rose to his feet, his stern face softened and flushed, he went forward

a step or two, and offered his hand to the young man.

“I am glad to see you once more, Torquil, in the land of the living.”

“Sir, I am glad to see you. I wish first of all to say, forgive me.”

“When I forgave Roberta, I forgave you also. Shall I be less merciful than He who said: ‘Go in peace, and sin no more.’”

“Sir, we truly sinned against your father-love and authority; but wherein else have we done wrong? Can it be sin to love as I love Roberta? Oh, no, sir! Give me Roberta for my wife. In the face of God and man, give her to me; and then—”

“Has Baron Torquil given you permission to ask for my daughter?”

“Alas, no, sir! but—”

“Neither do I.”

“Roberta loves me. Do not force us to a clandestine marriage. I wish to deal honorably with you, sir.”

“I do not fear Roberta. Her lesson has been a sufficient one. Sir, I will deal honorably and kindly with you, and for this end, I will speak plainly. I will not give you Roberta. I will never sanction a marriage between you. I think Roberta is so much my daughter as to refuse a marriage which God himself interfered to prevent. He separated you with His wind and His waves. You had planned for yourselves a dwelling in the Land of Love. He took you both to the Land of the Shadow of Death. If you did not learn there how dreadful a thing a disobedient and unequally yoked marriage is, Roberta learned the lesson. She comes. Let her speak both for herself and for you.”

As he ceased, Roberta opened the door. She entered with a swift movement, holding her level palms and raised face toward Donald. He stretched out his arms, trembling—almost sobbing with emotion—and she fled to them, as a brooding bird to its nest. Balfour glanced at their meeting faces; both so beautiful, both so

full of love and sorrow ; and instead of separating the lovers, he left them alone. He pitied their suffering ; he had no wish to be a witness to it.

He went into his study, and walked restlessly about. He could hear the murmur of their voices—Donald's passionate pleading, Roberta's sad, dissenting tones, and low, distressful weeping. He would not interfere. Whatever was their decision, they must reach it alone. Certainly, he suffered with them. In spite of the trouble Donald had caused him, he liked the young man ; and though he called this liking "a weakness," and reproved himself for indulging in it, it enabled him to understand his daughter's great love for Donald Torquil, and to pity her for it.

He had told himself that he would give the lovers half an hour in which to comfort each other for their hard fate. When it was over, he went back to them. His glance fell first upon Donald. Never had the youth looked so bril-

liantly beautiful. His long sickness had given to his fine, fair face a singular delicacy, and the tide of life beneath shone through it, as a light through a Parian vase. He leaned against a tall black cabinet; he was trembling with eagerness and feeling; his hands were holding Roberta's hands; his eyes were fixed upon her; he was pleading as men plead for the one true love that is granted them in this life.

And if ever a woman is beautiful, it is in the presence of such an adorer. Balfour now understood his daughter's marvelous charm. In that momentary glance he saw it all—the superbly tall, slender figure, in its straight, long robe of dark tartan; the exquisitely formed and tinted face; the large, dark, soulful eyes, drawing like a spiritual magnet the soul they looked into; the shadowing cloud of black hair, falling in innumerable waves and tendrils about her temples, throat and shoulders. It was an instantaneous picture of human loveliness, never to be forgotten.

He came toward them, and Donald turned pleadingly to him.

“Speak for me, sir!” he cried. “Alas! I have no advocate but you. By the love of our dear, common God, have pity upon me!”

“Torquil, I have most pity on you when I say, what I see Roberta has already said: ‘There can be no question of love between Donald Torquil and Roberta Balfour.’”

“Father, I said not that. There is love, undying love, between Donald and myself. I said only that there could be no question of marriage between us.”

“But the reason, sir? The reason? Is not true love the foundation of marriage? Is there any other foundation but love? I love Roberta, and she loves me.”

“There is the difference in your faith.”

“What have creeds to do with love? Love is above them. Whenever did love ask of any man or woman: ‘What church do you worship in?’”

“True. It is faith that must ask what church

love worships in. There is also the difference of race."

"My love touches not such a small question. Race is for the body. I love Roberta with my soul. Our souls have one parentage—the Father of Spirits."

"Donald! Donald Torquil! Reason not with me. Conscience is above reason. Conscience is not to be moved either by pity or reason or favor. My conscience forbids this marriage. My God himself punished you both for its intention. Will He always remember mercy in His judgments? We have no right to expect it. Do not dare again to provoke Him to anger."

"Think you that God Almighty ordered the storm specially for our reproof?"

"Yea; I am sure of it."

"I think kinder and nobler things of my God. I read in my Bible that '*Love* and the way of good works are from Him.'* True love is of the nature of God, pure and eternal."

*Eccle. II.: 15.

“Roberta, my child, say farewell to Donald Torquil. I forbid you to speak longer with him. Even now I have let a foolish tenderness prolong an inevitable parting.”

“I will never resign Roberta. She is my own beloved wife. She was born for me. No man can rob me of her and be innocent. My Roberta! You will never forget me?”

“Never! Never! Never, Donald! Never in life or eternity!”

“I am going to Canada. I know not for how long. Be sure, however, that sooner or later, I will come to claim you.”

He drew her to his breast and kissed her pale face and wet eyes—kissed her with the heart-breaking, holy tenderness with which we kiss the dead; and resigning her to her father’s consolation, left her so, without a word of farewell to him. But Balfour took no offense at the omission. He set his lips firmly, as he held Roberta in his arms, and watched Donald going with swinging, rapid steps to the *Sea Bird*.

Suddenly Roberta disengaged herself from her father's embrace. She left the room and hastily fled up-stairs. In a few minutes she left the house. Balfour did not attempt to stay her. He divined her motive and understood that it would give an active finality to the parting.

She followed Donald's footsteps very quickly; but the young man was in that frenzy of feeling which demands rapidity of action. When she reached the little pier, Angus was getting the canvas aloft, and the boat was going like a race-horse before the wind. Donald stood at the bow, with his face southward. A cry from Roberta made him quickly turn. He saw her on the very verge of the slip. Her arm was extended and in her hand there was a flutter of lawn, like the beating of a bird's white wing. Her face, in the grayness of all around her, showed white as light. For the rain beat upon her blowing garments, and the wind blew back her hood and scattered her dark hair. She heeded nothing and she saw nothing but the

swiftly vanishing boat and the tall figure standing bareheaded watching her.

With an inexorable rapidity the boat drove on till she passed the point near by the rocky coast where Roberta had once faced death in Donald's arms. The thought made the girl cry out in an agony of remorseful memory. How could she give him up? Her heart bitterly reproached her, as she went slowly homeward, weeping under her close-drawn hood and whispering to the wet, wild wind:

"Farewell, love ! Farewell, love !"





CHAPTER XVIII.

AT THE LAST—PEACE.

“ Sweet Mercy ! to the gates of Heaven,
This mortal lead, his sins forgiven ;
The rueful conflict, the heart riven,
With vain endeavor ;
And memory of earth’s bitter leaven,
Effaced forever.”

“ O ! fading honors of the dead !
O ! high ambition lowly laid.”

Time is a sword. It smites everything mortal—youth, beauty, delights of all kinds. And when a man has passed sixty years of age, how dark is the angle of life which remains to him ! And this, not because he has few joys, but because he has ceased to hope. He can no

longer delude himself with a future which lies in the shadow of the grave.

Sir Rolfe stood mournfully one day at the gates of Tasmer, feeling the full force of this truth. He had not realized his expectations, and he did not anticipate their more perfect fulfillment. The men and the women of Torquilbens and Tasmer braes had disappeared. There were no barelegged children running about the straths, and no picturesque cottages overgrown with mosses and stonewort in the sheltered cranies; and there were thousands of sheep, and many perfectly built and symmetrical sheep-folds, but the change had brought him neither the wealth nor the satisfaction he had hoped.

Lady Moidart had judged wisely that the clearance policy at Tasmer would be weakened by counteracting principles. Besides which, Sir Rolfe's health—undermined by long residence in India—was unable to endure the cold of the mountains. In a large measure he had to leave everything to the supervision of shepherds and

gamekeepers, who had no salutary fear of his personal inspection.

And now there had come a sudden and critical change in his personal condition. He knew that morning, as he stood watching the gray old sea, that his days were numbered, and gravely solemn thoughts passed through the old knight's mind. He looked over the Minch dimpling in the sunshine, and a swift and irresistible desire to feel the swell and motion of the ocean came to him.

There had been for some years a growing hatred between the Torquil and the Melvich fishermen, and in the last season it had assumed a dangerous character. Melvich had just sold his estate; what if he sailed as far as Melvich loch and saw the new proprietor? It would be wiser and kinder than to leave to Donald the inheritance of an unsettled quarrel.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, Angus approached, and his unusual presence

decided the baron. He bade the young fisher get the *Sea Bird* ready and go up the coast with him. Angus feared the *Sea Bird* was "too long at anchor to be safe at aal;" and Sir Rolfe, who was easily made positive by a little opposition, sent him for his own fishing smack.

As they sailed northward a handsome shooting lodge, perched among the heather of Ben Sana, attracted Sir Rolfe's notice, and he asked Angus, with a faint curiosity, if the new owner of Melvich had built it?

"They were saying it wass Lord Lenox built the lodge," answered Angus; "and they were saying, mirover, that it iss aal the Melvich landt he hass peen puying; for he iss a rich man, a rael rich man, and mirover, a mean man iss he. He hass the goldt, and he has the landt, put there iss not in aal Scotlandt so poor a man ass he iss! For he will not pe spending anything at aal, and the rich wife he wass marrit on, she wass soon leafing him, and there

were many padt wordts about it. Yes, inteet! Have you peen hearing of the trouble, sir?"

"No one has spoken to me of it, Angus."

"They were saying—and it is the God's truth, sir—they were saying that he wass a rael miser. He cleared hiss place, and then when the people were aal sent away he began to safe money, and the more he was safing then the more he wass wanting to safe. So it was house after house, acre after acre, as I haf peen toldt. 'Tis a poor way to pe spending one's life, sir! 'Tis a poor way, whateffer."

"It is, indeed, Angus. Such men are the devil's scorn and mockery, for they neither get this world nor yet escape the second death."

"I am a ferry poor man myself, but I will not pe so poor a man as Lord Lenox is. No inteet, thank God!"

"There is a great difference between you and Lord Lenox, Angus. You are poor, and poverty is in want of some things. He is avaricious, and avarice is in want of everything."

This conversation turned the baron's thoughts back to the young man he had known seven years before. The events of that time looked far past. He remembered Lenox, full of ambitions, to which gold was to be only the stepping-stone. When they met he found that gold had become his god and the goal of all his aims. His finer qualities had evaporated in the struggle for it. He had forgotten all his enthusiasms and dissipated all his illusions. The sunrise for Lenox had melted into the light of common day; the air was emptied of wonder; his soul had fallen to the quality of the thing it worked in.

He drove a hard bargain with Torquil. No memory of the baron's hospitality or of the beautiful Sara, whom he had once loved as well as he could love any woman, softened it. Torquil left Melvich humbled and sad and full of vague regrets. When he got fairly out to sea a strange desire came to him. He wished to go to Ellerloch, and he bid Angus take the boat

there. He wondered, indeed, over the strange impulse; but, then, a man has very little knowledge of himself who does not often regard his own thoughts and actions with wonder and curiosity.

No distinct purpose was in his mind; but as they voyaged onward in the calm of the summer day, in the starlight and the moonlight, listening for miles and miles to the endless crash of the Atlantic swell, the purpose formed itself clearly enough. He was sure of it when the boat ran into the little harbor in an afternoon rain-storm. Grim and lonely looked the small stone cabins, with their slate roofs shining in the heavy shower. But he took small note of the village. He left Angus with the boat, and walked straight to the minister's house. Balfour was out, and it was Roberta who welcomed their visitor. The tall, soldierly figure, though wan and much shrunken, struck her with admiration. When he spoke, his voice had tones and inflections which stirred her heart to tears. She

insisted that he should take off his wet cloak; she had the fire replenished; she made him a cup of most refreshing tea.

Sir Rolfe watched her movements with the greatest interest. He admired her beauty, and wondered a little over its uncommon type. For, if Roberta, at nineteen years of age, had been a lovely girl, she was, at twenty-three, a superbly perfect woman. A great, kind soul looked through her fathomless eyes; her ways were exquisitely womanly; her voice low and sweet; her hands white and beautifully formed—hands made to help and caress.

She had no idea of his identity and she talked to him with the utmost freedom. He admired her intelligence; perhaps he admired still more the elegance and propriety of her dress. For Roberta had a native taste which always fitted itself to times and circumstances. The long, straying tresses, which had been so suitable to her girlhood, were now picturesquely braided and coiled, and added much to her stature and

dignity. The dark tartan of her dress was of more ample length; her collar was closed with a massive brooch of gold; her manner was grave and gentle, and her movements very graceful. She seemed to the baron the ideal of an exquisite womanhood, and she involuntarily stamped the purpose which had brought him to Ellerloch as desirable and excellent.

He was sipping his tea and talking to her when the minister entered. Balfour's face flushed at the sight, but his finer and nobler instincts instantly ruled.

"You are most welcome, Baron," he said, and he frankly put his hand into the one offered him. Perhaps he was conscious of a slight reluctance, but it was instantly conquered. And in a few moments the two men sat together upon the same hearth; the minister expectant, cautious, desirous of good will; the baron conciliating, anticipative of the next world, careless of the petty animosities of this one.

The minister spoke first.

“Torquil, you have taken a long journey?”

“I am about to take a much longer one, sir—even to ‘the Land very far off.’ I desired to speak to you before my departure.”

There was a moment’s silence, and Sir Rolfe’s thin, wan face reddened vividly, as he continued :

“I—I—I wish to say—pardon my ill words to you and of you. This confession alone can give me ease; it is the only adequate penance. A good Christian ought not to have spoken as I have done about you and yours.”

“I have been equally guilty, Baron. I ask your pardon, also.”

The two men leaned toward each other; they clasped hands, and the minister said some words, sacred, secret, confidential—no more to be spoken of than was that mysterious acknowledgment and pardon that must have taken place when the repentant Peter met the risen Christ by the Lake of Tiberius.

In a short time Roberta entered with refresh-

ments, and the conversation became more general. And never had Sir Rolfe been more loving and charming. He told them incidents of his youth in India—tales of forlorn and desperate valor—stubborn fights with adverse circumstances or desperate foes ; and with the light of victory on his face, kindled the cheeks of those who listened to him. Then he spoke of Tasmer, and of the deeds of his fierce ancestors—the bare-armed thanes of Ross, who had piled its massive masonry, and watched from its high walls the incursions of the great clans by which they were surrounded.

Roberta rose as he finished ; she opened the piano, and, with a quick, nervous touch, struck from its keys the pibroch of his clan. No earthly music could have so deeply moved the old knight. He murmured the gathering song to it—a few words too fierce for any melody—the invocation of arming men to the bloody companies of the birds of prey.

When the music ceased, both player and singer

had said everything to each other's hearts that could be said. With a kindly, kindling glance, the baron clasped Roberta's hand in his own, and then bowed his head to kiss it. Roberta, with a quick divination of his intention, lifted her face and kissed him. She kissed him for that he was Donald's father. She kissed him for his own charming loveliness. For, whatever the baron had been in the stress and struggle of life, he was now, when at the threshold of the grave, wonderfully childlike and Christlike.

Roberta then left the two men alone. She could not but speculate on the purport of the baron's visit to Ellerloch, and she could not avoid believing that it was a kind one to Donald and herself. Surely her father would be tender and reasonable with a dying man. Balfour wished to be so, but, even while Roberta was speculating about his attitude, the minister was assuring his conscience that he would not wrong it a tittle for any plea of mere human kindness.

The baron sat silent, until the last vibrations

of the stirring, war-like pibroch had died out of the atmosphere, then his first remark was a reflection upon the sympathy between music and life.

“Balfour,” he said, “our life is very like music in one respect; there is a constant wandering from the key-note in a thousand harmonies and combinations; but the player always returns to the key-note at last.”

“And the key-note of a good life—is God.”

“Even so, Balfour. Let me carry out the simile. Quick melodies, without great deviations from the key-note, are like our pibrochs, joyous or stirring; slow melodies, which only reach it after painful dissonances and frequent changes, are sad. Do you understand?”

“You mean that lives that never wander far from God are joyous and strong? You mean that those which only reach Him after long deviations into paths leading nowhere, and paths leading in wrong directions, are full of sadness and of many fears?”

“That is what I mean. I have been a great wanderer, but I have reached the key-note again. The music of my life is nearly finished.”

Then, with a sudden access of interest, he lifted his face quickly, and asked :

“What are we to do about our children?”

The question was so abrupt that Balfour was startled by its imperative demand. He looked steadily at the baron, reflected a moment, and answered :

“We are to do right, Sir Rolfe ; we are to do right. We are to do what in the hour and article of death our souls will approve.”

“Just so, Balfour. I was once bitterly opposed to Donald’s marriage with your daughter. That was when death was not in my thoughts. Now that we are ‘familiar,’ I think differently ; now that I have seen Roberta Balfour I am anxious that Donald should have so fair, so good a woman for his wife. Do not deny them your sanction any longer. Donald may be home any day. Let him have your consent to visit

Roberta. I would wish to welcome her to Tasmer while I am yet its master. You see how short and frail my tenure now is." And he stretched out his thin, white hands, and looked into Balfour's face with eyes in which there was already the far-off look of a soul watching for its own eternity.

"I cannot speak in a hurry. I cannot promise. I may sin away my child's soul."

"Only leave Roberta to her own conscience; that is all I ask. You permit no one to dictate to your conscience; give your daughter the same liberty. We are at the close of life. Shall our prejudices any longer darken their youth, and make bare and barren their days? Balfour, it is a great injustice to them. I have been wrong and cruel. I have asked of God this favor; to right the wrong before I go away forever."

"You trouble me, Torquil. You trouble me greatly. I must talk with my conscience. I must talk with my God. I wish to do right—only right."

“I believe you. Can it be wrong for us to give our children the same liberty of conscience we claim as an inalienable right for ourselves? They are of full age—they are responsible to God. Let us trust them. I am weary now. I have said what I came to say. Let me sleep—under your roof.”

There was a moral grandeur in the humility of this request. Balfour was greatly touched by it. He gave the dying man his arm to lean upon. He assisted him in the removal of his raiment; he softly repeated the Benediction at his bedside ere he left him. Torquil slept soundly and peacefully as a child. Balfour paced his study floor the whole night long. The baron had sheltered himself higher than all creeds, even in the infinite love of his Maker; the minister had the restless pain of one who tries to confine the immortal spirit within the lines of a human creed.

With the morning tide the baron left Ellerloch. He leaned upon Roberta's arm as he

walked to the pier, and he treated her as a daughter, though he never named Donald. At the last, the two men parted like those who trust in God and in each other.

“We shall meet again, Torquil,” said the minister.

“We shall meet again—somewhere—some day—in the kingdom of God. Farewell, Roberta.”

Then as the boat left the pier, he waved his hand over the sparkling waters and said, with a smile:

“Is not this ‘great sea’ beautiful? But there is to be no sea there. Shall we not miss it, I wonder?”

He was too far away to hear Balfour’s answer. The north wind and the flowing tide were driving the boat before them. Balfour watched the tall figure, sitting motionless, with troubled eyes. He turned homeward with Roberta and was speechless. It was not until they

reached the gate of the manse garden that Roberta said :

“Baron Torquil is a true nobleman. But is he not very ill, father?”

“He is dying, but I think—I hope—yes, I truly believe,

“‘Into that dark, he takes with him a Light ;
The Lamp that can illuminate the grave.’”

When Sir Rolfe reached Tasmer again, he found that Sara and his little granddaughter Patricia had arrived during his absence. They were not unexpected. He was quite aware that the tone of his last letter to Sara would make her understand that his days were numbered. Her arrival was a great comfort, and her tender care of him probably prolonged his life. He was also greatly attached to Patricia. In the gloaming he generally asked for her, and the child expected and liked the visit. In her white night-dress she was laid in his arms, and he crooned softly to her, half-talking and half-singing until the little maid was fast asleep. And

often, when Sara came for the child, she found the baby hands clasping the Beads of Tasmer, and the dying grandfather praying above them.

He seemed to tarry on earth only to see his son. But Donald was in a position where obedience to orders was imperative; and there was some necessary delay in procuring the authority which gave him freedom to return to Tasmer. But he came at last. Sir Rolfe heard Sara's voice in joyous modulations, and he knew what it meant. She had been walking in the fir-wood, and had there met her brother.

The meeting between father and son was solemnly affectionate; and these few last days united them with an indissoluble bond. There was now perfect confidence between them. They spoke of Roberta; and Donald received his father's full approval of his choice. He made no allusion to the years which had been darkened by opposition and exile. A sweet restraint forbade all reproach. He apprehended

that his father had also suffered disappointment and loneliness. Both had forgiven. At the last there was a great love and a great peace.

One night, just at sunset, he spoke to Donald about the "clearance." It was the only time he named it. His eyes filled with *their last tears* as he said :

"It was a mistake ; it was a great wrong ; it was a great failure, Donald. I gave fifty pounds to assist in sending my people from me. I would give fifty thousand pounds to see them on Tasmer braes again."

"If ever I have the power I will bring them back, father."

"You promise?"

"Solemnly !"

"For the peace of my soul, do it."

Then he sent Donald away and asked for Patricia. The child was asleep in his arms when Sara came, half an hour afterward, for her. Father and daughter smiled in each other's face, as the babe was lifted from the old arms ;

for, to a lonely father, a daughter is very dear, and Sara sat close to Sir Rolfe's heart. It was their last "good-night." It was their parting smile.

An hour afterward Father Matthew entered the room. As the baron was absent, he supposed him to be engaged in the oratory, and he sat down to wait. But after a little while he became sensible of that strange silence which accompanies death. He stood up and listened intently. There was no movement. There was no echo of sigh or prayer. He pushed aside the door very gently. Sir Rolfe lay upon his face, at the foot of the great white crucifix, with the ivory beads in his hand. His cold fingers marked the last "Our Father" which his lips had said.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE SECRET OF THE BEADS.

“For modes of Faith, let graceless zealots fight;
He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

So, Sir Rolfe died, and so, in his last years, he would have desired to go. Yet Donald remembered how once, when he was a lad, he had heard his father wish to die as a soldier—“with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.” But who has the oracle of his death? Only God knows the place and the manner in which a soul shall meet its latest enemy.

They had all loved him dearly. He had true friendship, and, in the main, affectionate obedience; yet, before the majesty of death, each living soul of his household bowed itself humbly, and acknowledged: “I have done too little.”

In the long past centuries when it was unsafe to let their neighbors know that the head of the clan was dead, the Torquils had begun to bury their dead at midnight. For unnumbered generations it had been the custom, and Sir Rolfe had expressed a wish to have it conformed to in his own case. It was then necessary to keep the dead for many days. Friends were to notify, and facilities were few and slow. It was not until midnight of the eighth day after his death that Sir Rolfe was laid among his forefathers. During these eight days, he lay in the room which he had mostly occupied. The August sun fell brightly upon his worn, white face; the fresh winds from the ocean blew over it. How tranquil, how distant, how grandly, terribly different he was! But his lips kept, until the last moment, the faint, glad smile of one who had died dreaming of heaven.

The burial night was still and warm. There was no moon, and at midnight every fisher and shepherd having the least claim to a drop of the

Torquil blood came up to Tasmer. Each carried a blazing torch; and in this fitful light they carried Baron Rolfe to his resting-place in Torquil church-yard. All the midnight spaces were filled with the heavenly, peaceful echoes of the burial service recited in a solemnly triumphant voice by Father Matthew. When it was finished, every man extinguished his torch at the grave-side, and, with a silent lifting of their bonnets in a last "farewell" to the dead chief, they scattered,

Sara was weeping on her husband's arm. Donald looked down into the grave with tearless eyes, but his heart shuddered constantly as he watched torch after torch extinguished in the open, narrow house, which was soon to be closed forever. At length the light was nearly gone; he was conscious that only one torch remained. Some one on the opposite side of the grave held it. He looked up, and saw it was in the hand of Balfour. Roberta stood by his side,

It was the first glimpse of her dear face he had had for years.

Their eyes met in one long, loving, sorrowful gaze; involuntarily Donald stretched out his hand; involuntarily Roberta touched it. They met—they clasped above the grave—above the closed coffin of the kind old knight who had pleaded their cause so well.

The act, simple and touching, and full of a sad significance, powerfully affected Balfour. He took his daughter's hand and turned toward the gate of the inclosure. As they trod silently the narrow path, some one spoke, some one touched Roberta's arm and stayed them. It was Sara. In a voice trembling with sorrow, she said:

"Mr. Balfour. My brother has often been your guest. Come up to the castle with us, to-night—you and Miss Balfour."

"We cannot."

He spoke with difficulty, and with a decision that seemed unkind, but which was really the result of a tumult of feeling he was trying to

control. Sara and Mr. Maclane urged him a little, and, during the passing conversation, Donald took Roberta's hand. Before her father—before his sister and his friends—with the priest standing near, he lifted her face and solemnly kissed it there. It was a new betrothal. It was a promise to which he called as witnesses the dead and the living of his house. It was a fresh claim upon Roberta, and Balfour was almost angry at the advantage which it gave to Donald.

After that kiss it was easy to refuse the hospitality of Tasmer. In short, he would not be persuaded by any plea of Maclane's good feeling, nor of Sara's courtesy, nor of Donald's love. He was, indeed, a little irritated by the discussion, and he said not a word to his daughter, as they journeyed over the cheerless sea, depressed by the infinite solitude of the dark waters and the still greater solitude of hearts, each nursing its own sense of wrong.

On the whole, however, the minister had

acted with dignity and prudence. Donald and Reberta, in that swift, unconsidered, unsanctioned reassertion of their love over the grave of the late baron, had placed him in a position that did not permit him dissent at the time ; and which, therefore, assumed his approval.

He was not by any means sure that he could approve their marriage. Sir Rolfe's plea had touched, but it had not convinced him. As soon as he arrived at Ellerloch he wrote to a church in Edinburgh, which had long desired his services, and accepted its call.

Roberta received the intelligence with a look of reproach.

"Do you not trust me, father, even yet?" she asked.

"I wish to take you out of temptation, Roberta."

"You wish to take me away from Donald?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

“Is there any reason to ask that question again? I have answered it to you often.”

“You have answered it to me, father; now answer it to your own heart. Is Donald's faith really the great stumbling-block you imagine it to be? Are you not in some measure afraid of what Aunt Helen and all my cousins will say? Of what the ministers of your synod will say? Yea, of what these poor villagers in Ellerloch will say? Be just to Donald. Be just to yourself and to me.”

Every question was like a sword-thrust to him; but he gave no sign of his spiritual wound. His face was a little sterner only as he added:

“Before I sanction your marriage with Donald Torquil, I must have the assurance of my conscience that I am doing right.”

“Father, for nearly five years you have been seeking this assurance. If I was really doing wrong, would not the sin have been clear to you long before this? When I really disobeyed you—when I really deceived you—when I really

sinned against your love and confidence, was there any need of this search? You—and I also—had a consciousness of it, swift and sure. We had no need to argue or to search about it. I broke the fifth command, and I came very near to losing that long life which is the promise of its observance. Father, you must not go to all sorts of theological books about Donald and me. What have synods and institutes and creeds to do with our love?"

"You speak without knowledge."

"I speak as my heart speaks. I am faithful to my conscience. I ask the blessing of God upon my love. Is there any other or any greater law?"

"If events stopped with ourselves, if—"

"Ah, then it is as I said! You fear what this person and that person will suspect? You fear to have your motives misunderstood? You think people will never know how firmly you have opposed my marriage, or if they do, that they will say: 'Minister Balfour has made his

daughter Lady Torquil at last; you see that every conscience has its price.' Are not these things so, father?"

"Roberta, who gave you liberty to probe your father's conscience? To imagine his motives and invent his difficulties?"

He left her with these questions unanswered, and went into his study to hide the pain her analysis had caused him.

Roberta had divined much that the minister had always refused to be separately conscious of. There are in every soul some dark corners full of unacknowledged, underlying motives. To have them dragged into the light of conscience and the light of discussion is not a pleasant experience. Balfour was at first exceedingly irritated by it. But above every other thing, the man was a just man. He was even more severe with his own recognized faults than he was with those of any other person. He was compelled by the integrity of his nature to answer Roberta's questions to himself; and it was

with humiliation he admitted that there was much truth in their interrogatory.

After all, Roberta and Donald were now answerable to God. He might counsel, but their souls were of age, and amenable to God's reward or punishment. Frequently he had spoken bitterly of the priests of the Romish Church assuming the charge of souls, and requiring nothing from their people but implicit obedience to the commands of the Church. He had said: "Souls are to be judged individually; they must be permitted individual judgment." This very thing he had been denying to his child with a persistent stubbornness. The fact was suddenly clear to him.

"I have been wrong!" And he made the acknowledgment with a slow, distinct emphasis, staying his walk up and down his study floor to utter the words. "I have been jealous of my authority, spiritual and temporal. I have feared the opinions of my sister, and of my nephews and nieces, of my fellows in the ministry, of all

and sundry who know me. I have called it 'the fear of God;' it has been very much the fear of man. Mercifully, both repentance and works meet for repentance are yet possible. Now I will leave Donald and Roberta to the commands of their own consciences; and if I have not the authority, well, then, neither have I the responsibility." He made the surrender freely, without anger, but he permitted himself some compensating comfort in the thought that Donald could not marry for a year after his father's death, and that for so long yet his child would be under his own influence. "And as to what may happen in a year, who can tell?"

The last thought was not a kind one in its essence, but he put it away without any indulgence of it. And though he did not enter into a formal renunciation of his past feelings, or express in so many words the change which had taken place—not in his opinions, but in the application of his opinions—Donald and Roberta

understood that he had accepted the fact of their marriage, and was inclined to hope they were at least justified in their own consciences. Neither expected more than this. Balfour's nature was of the quality of his country's granite. When young, he had been hewn with hard tools into a certain form; a grand, massive form, that would not, perhaps, be improved by chipping off a corner here and there.

The move to Edinburgh was now fully determined on, and Balfour took a sudden dislike to the lonely, misty village in which he had spent so many happy and sorrowful days. Every one has experienced these rapid changes of feeling toward places, houses, people, certain kinds of work, certain opinions. The soul which has been unconsciously growing, becomes in a night, as it were, ripe for change—for a wider arena, a keener life—it may be, a sharper sorrow—just as a sudden frost will give sudden ripeness to the grain.

He went to Edinburgh and took a house befit-

ting the position his new church gave him. Then he recognized that he had long been famishing for books, and he satisfied his longing with an extravagant generosity. He was impatient to complete his change of life. He appeared to be suddenly younger, more imposing in appearance, quicker in his movements; he had cast the past behind, he was turning to the future, strong with the lessons the past had taught him.

The move was propitious to the lovers. During the winter months it was almost impossible to travel between Ellerloch and Tasmer, but communication with Edinburgh was comparatively easy and quick. Indeed, Donald no sooner heard of the minister's intention, than he began to contemplate spending the winter in the capital, in the constant society of Roberta. The great drawback to this plan was the want of ready money. He had come to his inheritance, and found himself poor, and soon he discovered

that the estate was in the hands of authorized robbers.

The first tenet of service is to serve itself, and the servants of Tasmer had been exceedingly faithful to their own interests. Everything had been favorable to their dishonesty. For a long time the late baron had neither had the power nor the inclination to investigate his affairs. They were purposely made complex and fatiguing, and, as his wants were small, he was permitted a sufficient sum of money to satisfy them—a wise generosity on the part of the factor and the head shepherd and game-keeper, as it prevented all inquiries and explanations. Donald's absence made their system of spoliation easy, for Father Contach thought only of the baron's spiritual welfare, and Maclane seldom came to Tasmer, and could hardly when there discuss with his father-in-law the income of his estate.

But Donald was soon suspicious of the truth, and it did not take him long to understand the shameful schemes which had puzzled the sick

and weary Sir Rolfe; and as Donald had no toleration for theft, the unfaithful servants were quickly placed within the discipline of the law. Financially, however, Donald derived no satisfaction from this movement; the men were Celts, selfish and greedy, and fully prepared to keep a tight grip upon their stolen property.

It was in this total want of faithful service, in this cruel realization that honor and honesty are not to be hired out, that Donald remembered with tears and longing the men and women who had been sent away to make room for these clever, unscrupulous managers. Oh, for the trusty Fergus once more in the castle! Oh, for the trusty Torquils on the fells with the sheep, and on the heather with the game! They might be slow, but they were the souls of piety and fidelity.

Under the new order of things there had been a gradual influx of strangers from the coast of Ireland. They were pushing and energetic; they had made Torquil a fine lobster fishing

station, but they offended Donald wherever he saw them—offended him, though they bowed down to him with the most cringing humility, and had for his ears only the words of flattery and compliment. For they had possession of the best cottages and the best boats and the best fishing-grounds, and the native race had fallen back as they encroached.

Donald regarded these things with a passionate regret, and Roberta shared all his anger and all his longings. They sat hours over Donald's plans and estimates, considering the yield of the game and the land and the wool, and calculating how much yearly could be saved toward bringing home the Torquils. For, from the very hour of his succession, this hope and end had been in the heart of the new master of Tasmer.

Both were, however, aware that little could be done until after their marriage. As long as Roberta was in Ellerloch, the *Sea Bird* was traveling between Tasmer and Ellerloch. When Roberta removed to Edinburgh, Donald

found himself unable to do anything without consulting her. And neither of them thought it possible to shorten the term of mourning for Sir Rolfe. They felt it imperative to give all the ceremonious respect to his memory, which his relationship and his position demanded of them in the public mind.

But Donald had many a weary hour. He had been compelled to call in the help of lawyers and accountants, and they were daily making his great losses more and more clear to him. The new servants resented the unaccustomed watch over them, and gave little satisfaction, and his military training was not, perhaps, the best preparation for the circumstances in which he was placed. He himself was prompt and faithful in all his duties; and he had been obedient to his superiors when his service demanded it. He expected from others the excellencies which they did not possess inherently, and which had not been cultivated in them.

These seem to be prosaic and very ordinary

trials, but it is precisely such trials which are hardest to bear. When a man fights with his equal, his spirits rise to the encounter; whether he conquer or fail, he feels no degradation. But a daily, hourly fight with inferiors is a different thing. Intellect must stoop to match itself with vulgar cunning; honor and truth have to meet covert enmity and fathomless deception. Such an ignoble fight greatly depresses a noble soul—the weapons its enemy uses are not in its armory; it has to study the tactics of fear, hatred and envy, in order to defeat them. Donald would far rather have ridden in the van of an invading army, than been compelled to buckle down to such a worrying defense of his own rights and such an irritating prosecution of the wrong-doing of others.

Upon Christmas Eve he was suffering from an accumulation of annoyances, and Angus had unwittingly added the last drop to the cup of petty injustice and mortification mingled for him.

"Here is a gold sovereign for you, Angus, and I hope you will have a very happy Christmas feast," he said.

"It iss ferry gladt I am of the sovereign, sir. I wass safing aal my money to pring home again my grandtfather and my grandtmother. A ferry poor time they are hafing, sir, and it iss old they are: and thinking, mirover, of the graves of Torquil. They will not pe resting in any other place whateffer, sir."

Donald did not answer. A great wave of feeling—partly anger—stirred him. Then he remembered the holy festival close at hand, and was ashamed and sorry. The bell was ringing in the little church, and he went down there and offered the sacrifice of thanksgiving. When he returned home there was a large fire of blazing logs on the hearth, and he sat down before it and began to think on many things.

Presently, when his heart was very tender—being full of gratitude for Roberta's love, and full of hope in that he trusted to bring back

again his banished kin—he went into the oratory and lifted the ivory Beads of Tasmer. He thought of the men and the women whose claim upon them had once been as strong as his own, and the tremendous solidarity of the two worlds—of the dead and the living—was present to his conception in a strikingly personal manner. The Communion of Saints! The indivisibility of the Church militant and the Church triumphant! Oh, the unspeakable riches of that grace which made him partaker, even in this life, of the hope and the love of the holy dead!

Suddenly a few words that Father Contach had spoken that night to his people came to him with wonderful force:

“Take your morsel of bread and put it in the Lord’s hand for a blessing, and you shall eat and be satisfied. When the tide comes in, it fills the great caves as easily as the small sand-ripples. Hold out both hands and God will fill them. And, if the strait is a great one, God has special helps for special occasions.”

How good the promise of such words! He let it fill his heart with gladness, as he knelt humbly before the great crucifix, standing white and solemn in the fitful light of the fire. Lost in meditation, he remained until the sense of "presence" was sweetly intense. Then he bowed his whole soul to this majesty of the Unseen; for his faith was too sincere to refuse the consolation of the mysterious.

"I have been visited," he said, joyfully, and his fingers touched the large bead for the first "Our Father."

It parted between his fingers as he held it. His very soul shuddered as he felt the separation, but he completed the prayer, and then rose and looked at the broken bead. As he did so his eyes grew fixed and large, a bright color spread over his face, and after a few moments' intent gaze, he clasped his hands in adoration of wonder and delight.

For the broken bead revealed the secret

which the Tasmer Rosary had faithfully kept for seven hundred years. The beads were all composed of two parts, so exquisitely fitting that only oriental patience and ingenuity could have fashioned them. And the ivory was but the shell. In the interior of each bead there was an uncut gem of great value.

As each bead yielded its treasure to Donald's efforts, his soul was more and more joyful. He foresaw now the fulfillment of all his hopes: the home-bringing of the Torquils from exile; the building of new cottages for them; the real improvement of the estate; Roberta's dreams of a school for the children, of a hospital for the sick, of a home for the homeless; all the wells of comfort that were to be the gift of the Beads of Tasmer.

At last they lay before him—sixty-three jewels—a glittering company of rubies and diamonds. And he stood up before God and thanked Him joyfully because that from among all the sons of his race he had been chosen to

dispense the gift of Knight Murdo's Rosary. And he opened the small sandal-wood box which had kept so long the prophecy of "The Beads," and read aloud with the glad confidence of faith turned into sight :

"Tellen these trewe wordse :

Whaune Tasmer's fortune shalle wane and faide

Thaune aske of the Beads of Tasmer aide."





CHAPTER XX.

BRINGING HOME THE BRIDE.

“Hail, Love! the Death-defyer! age to age
Linking with flowers in the still heart of man;
Dream to the Bard and marvel to the Sage!
Glory and mystery since the world began.”

“With her womanly beauty and queenly calm
She steals to my heart with a blessing of balm;
And O, but the wine of Love sparkles with foam!
When I come home, when I come home,
Home, home, when I come home!”

Early in the morning he started for Edinburg, with the gems next his heart. He went straight to Roberta. She heard his voice and step, and came hastily to meet him. With hands extended, she stopped at the sight of his face. The glory of some strange, great blessing was

on it. Donald took her in his arms. He could not speak, but she knew by his smile, by his radiant presence, by the joyful confidence of his manner, that some wonderful thing had come to him.

They went together to the parlor. Donald took the precious packet from his breast, and spread out the jewels before her. They were too excited for much speech. The splendor and the wonder of the gift! The sudden granting of all their desires! What words could express their amazement and their gratitude

“You will go for the Torquils now, Donald?”

“At once, dearest.”

“They are to have new and far better cottages?”

“We will plan them together. They shall be as you desire.”

“And the school, and the—”

“You shall make all your dreams come true.”

“I wish they knew about it. Write at once, Donald.”

"No; I will go at once. They would not comprehend a letter."

"Then you will go very soon?"

"As soon as I have turned the jewels into gold, and set builders to work on the homes for them. All the cottages pulled down at Easter-Torquil shall be rebuilt. Oh, I hope old Hector is alive, to lead the people back again."

"Let us tell my father."

The minister was in his study. He had been filling his soul with the pathetic importunity of Baxter and the Platonic loftiness of Howe; and when Roberta said: "Donald has found sixty-three rubies and diamonds in the Beads of Tasmer, and he is going to bring home all the Torquils from America, and build them new houses and a school, and make them happy and prosperous forever," he looked up at her with a faint smile, and answered:

"All this would never be said, except in a dream, Roberta."

"It is true! It is true! Come down-stairs and see."

Then Balfour went with his daughter, and his amazement was quickly amenable to reason. Humanity understands seeing better than believing.

Preparatory arrangements were quickly made, and Donald landed at Quebec early in February, and with all possible speed reached the small Scotch settlement sixty miles inward. The weather was bitterly cold, the country lonely and depressing. Only after three days' hard riding did he come in sight of the squalid log huts which bore the name of New Tasmer.

He was alone and on horseback, and it was the afternoon. There was a small inn at the entrance of the village, and his heart smote him when he saw the name "Donald Torquil" above the door. Namesake and kin, and yet so far from home—so far away from home!

A man whom he did not recognize took his horse, and pointed out to him the public door.

“Christine Torquil iss inside, sir, and she will be gifing you a welcome, sir.”

He went into the cabin, and stood for a moment looking at Christine. She was carding wool, and rocking the cradle of her babe with her foot. Ere he could speak, she began to sing. The soft, sibilant Gaelic had an inexpressibly mournful sound; the words were full of tears. Donald's eyes filled as their meaning smote his heart:

“From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas;
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.
Fair these broad meads, these hoary woods are grand;
But we are exiles from our native land!”

“Christine! Christine! I am come to take you back again!”

She rose, white and trembling, and looked at the young man. He had been well-known to her in the old days, and she had not forgotten him. She let her wool and cards fall to the

ground; she took his hands and kissed them; she murmured, amid broken sobs, passionate welcomes—and loving ejaculations. Donald answered her in Gaelic. The sound of the dear words on his tongue completed her joy. She made him sit down by the fire, and began to prepare him food and a warm drink.

“It iss ferry poor I am, Sir Tonalt. My man iss gone away from me; ’tis three months since he went away.”

“And where has he gone, Christine?”

“He iss gone from hence to death; in the Friday to holy heaven. *O! hon a rie! O! hon a rie!* My prave Tonalt iss gone away! It iss no more he will pe seeing the purple coasts of Skye and Rona, nor the plue peaks of Harriss peyont the gray Minch.”

“Is old Hector Torquil still alive, Christine?”

“He iss ferry well. His son Hugh iss gone away aalso; but he iss not seeing ferry much now.”

“Send to every cabin and tell the people to be at Hector Torquil's this night at seven o'clock.”

Quickly flew the word from home to home.

“*The Torquil* hass come; he hass come himself! We are going pack home, mirover!”

To Hector, Donald carried the news of his own arrival. The old soldier had aged much. He was sitting very quiet, his hands leaning on his staff, his head bowed above them, his eyes closed. Dreams of his stirring youth were filling the silent chambers of his brain. Behind his closed eyes he was seeing pictures of his native hills; mountains and mountains of amethyst, lights and shadows coming and going all day over them; vales of emeralds here and there, and leaping streams of silver, at sunrise turning to rivers of gold. Oh, for the laughter and the storm of the ocean! Oh, for the corries misty with blue-bells! Oh, for the little brown huts nestling in the shadow of the mountains, and the plaided human creatures, with collie dogs and flocks of sheep moving to and fro among them!

It was from such a dream Donald awakened him.

"*It iss the Torquil !*" he cried. " Bless God, it is the voice of *the Torquil !*" And when Donald said, joyfully : " Hector ! Hector Torquil !" the old man rose to his feet, erect and alert, as if he had been at roll-call, and answered with a glad promptness :

" Here, here, Sir Tonalt ! "

And what a congregation gathered that night in Hector's cabin ! What joy to see again the head of their sept ! What unspeakable joy to hear him say :

" Come back home. Come, all of you. There is enough for every Torquil on Torquil's land."

Donald stood in the midst of the room, and the men were gathered bare-headed around him. Most of them were of lofty stature, but Donald was taller than any ; and the *glengary* on his head, with the eagle's feather in front, added a noble, native grace to his beautiful form. Suddenly, he lifted the cap from his bright, curling hair,

and, standing thus, with a voice tuned to glad and sweet solemnity, he told them there the history of the Beads of Tasmer, and of the miraculous happiness and prosperity they had brought to the household of the Torquils. It was a story that touched these simple, pious peasants to spiritual enthusiasm. Faith was to them an easy effort of the mind. The more impossible a thing was, the more necessity there was for spiritual help; and spiritual help was the help they most of all trusted in. The old Rosary, the ancient path of prayer! Was it not the very way of the angels?

"Peace! Peace to Knight Murdo's soul!" said old Hector, solemnly. "Those peyont have not forgotten us. They haf been sorry for our sorrow, now they are gladt in our joy."

It was not considered wise to move at once. All possessed some trifle of property which they could dispose of. A few had cleared land, and began to like the independence of their new life.

Donald assisted such to still further improve their condition.

But the majority had tasted the word "home" in their hearts, and the idea grew swiftly to a passionate longing, which nothing but the misty headlands of the Minch and the Hills of Ross could satisfy. They were impatient for the spring and for the ship which Donald was to send to Quebec for them.

Rapidly the months flew by. It had seemed at first as if the year's delay would be hard to get over. But time well-filled goes very quickly. After Donald's return there was a constant journeying between Tasmer and Edinburgh. He had to consult Roberta about everything done. She drew the plans of the new cottages and of the pretty school-house, though Father Contach and Minister Balfour both gave their advice in the matter.

And there had to be new industries set on foot for the employment of the home-coming men. The game and the sheep, the lobster and

the deep-sea fishing were to be arranged on a basis profitable to all. The castle was to refurnish throughout. For Roberta's special pleasure a large conservatory was to be built. Donald went to sleep every night happily wearied out.

It was in these days he discovered, for the first time, the blessedness of hours brim full of work.

"I will never be idle again," he said to Father Contach.

And the Father pointed out the fact that he never could be if he continued to do his duty. He would be compelled to plan, to order, to supervise all the works he had laid out for the daily employment of his people.

"Fifty or sixty families will take their bread from your hand, Donald," he said; "you will be responsible for their well-doing. You are to marry a wife and be responsible for her happiness. You must live now for the future as well

as for the present; for others as well as for yourself."

It was in the early days of autumn that Donald brought home his bride—those golden September days when the air is fine and subtle, and the amber rays shine through the shining branches. The castle garden was full of the splendid glories of dahlias and hollyhocks, of the scents of sweet-brier and southernwood, and of all kinds of nameless perfumes—emanations of the earth, of the trunks of trees, of the ripened fruit, of the turning foliage. Old ocean laughed with incalculable dimples. The birds were singing their latest songs in the woods. From the church-tower in the village the bells sent forth a grave, sweet harmony, dilating in the air, wandering up to the castle-turrets and far out to sea. As the morning advanced, a soft yellow light fell like a glorious veil over earth and ocean, making the mountains more like clouds at sunset than real things.

There had been in Edinburgh a solemnly

quiet, religious ceremony, in which Minister Balfour himself joined the hands of his daughter and Sir Donald Torquil. Only Sara and Maclane and a few of Roberta's kindred had been present. A very blissful service it had been, and Donald and Roberta, for themselves, could have desired no nobler, no more blessed sacrament of their love than that touching service in the manse parlor.

But others had to be taken into consideration, and it was necessary for the Torquil to take his bride also by the ancient faith, in which his fathers had lived and died; and so, by its blessing, make Roberta indeed mistress of Tasmer. In a little gray church where the old religion had built itself a shrine, even in the city of John Knox, Father Contach was waiting for them. With infinite love and solemnity he joined their hands in the irrevocable tie of the Church. And thus they went forth to their new life, with its obligations bound to them by holy prayers, and its delights sanctified by holy blessings.

It had been resolved to hold the bride-feast in Tasmer, and to call all the clan and all the neighbors together for this festival. Sara and Maclane took charge of the preparations for this home-coming, and Nature crowned them with the gift of a few days of heavenly beauty. Early on the morning of the happy day, the rising mist revealed the Minch covered with boats, all making for Torquil pier. They were filled with men in their Sabbath clothing and with women in white caps, and lasses snooded with ribbons. For every man, woman and child of the Torquil blood, and all the Torquils who had intermarried with the MacFarlanes or the Mackenzies, were coming to Sir Donald Torquil's bridal feast.

They filled the cottages to overflowing, and found amusement enough in the fact of their rare meeting and in watching the constant arrival of the gentry in trig yachts or in fine carriages. At ten in the morning the bells rang out, and Father Contach was seen in the street

of the village, talking to a Torquil from Cairndow or Bundalloch, or listening to a tale of joy or sorrow from some girl whom he had, perhaps, christened, confirmed and married.

When the full glory of the noontide was over sea and land, Donald's carriage was seen at the top of the hill, a mile away. Then old Hector, leaning on the arm of Father Contach, went and stood at the entrance of the village to bless and welcome *the Torquil* and his bride. The people, with that mannerly behaviour which belonged to their temperament and education, ranged themselves along the roadside with smiling faces, casting handfuls of heather or ripe wheat, or sweet-smelling broom in the path of the bride's carriage. Their gentle blessing lingered in the still, golden atmosphere, and came to Roberta and Donald with the perfume of the flowers and the heavenly echoes of the church-bells.

When they reached the fir-wood, all sounds became a softened, tremulous murmur of glad-

ness. Hector was in a carriage with Father Contach, but the people spread themselves before and behind and on each side in the green shades—the fishers, feeling as if they were in a new world, solemnized by the tender, mystical light, and gravely curious about the birds and insects, of which the sea had taught them nothing.

Long tables had been laid for them in the big granaries, and there already Malcolm Roy's magic violin was heard calling them together in those plaintive or delirious strains which not a heart among them could resist. As the day passed on, the sense of festival grew stronger. The courts were full of carriages and servants. Men known through all the country-side, and richly garmented women, strolled among the late flowers, or sauntered in the newly adorned rooms of the castle. The tones of music, of low laughter, of rippling conversation, and the *frou-frou* of silken robes, intoxicated the spirits like wine. And Sara was everywhere present, full of

joy and welcome, to both peers and peasants: her dress of blue velvet, her shimmering pearl necklace, her coronal of bright hair, her charming manners, making her a conspicuous and delightful hostess.

At length the magnificent dining-hall was thrown open, and all its splendid space was thronged with guests of honor or renown. Then Donald led in the lovely woman whom he had made Lady of Torquil. A murmur, indescribable and irrepressible, ran through the pleased assemblage. Had such a pearl, indeed, come out of the fishing village of Ellerloch? For Roberta's girlish beauty had merely indexed the superb loveliness of her maturity. Within the past year she had improved marvelously; for, in love and hope and joyful confidence, beauty grows to its perfection.

She was tall enough to be mate for Donald's lofty stature; and her fine countenance, with its wide, white brow and shining eyes and glorious coloring, reflected a soul full of tenderness, intel-

lect and generosity, A robe of rich white satin clothed her. It had borders of silver-work, and the sapphires of Tasmer gleamed on her white throat and wrists, and clasped the supple silver zone which marked her waist. Orange-blossoms crowned her dark hair and lay among the laces at her bosom. Every heart bowed down to her—every tongue praised her.

When the wedding toast was drunk, the whole people came in. They stood around the hall in rows four deep, and when Father Contach blessed the bride-cup and lifted it toward heaven, five hundred cups were lifted with it, and the murmur of the "*Amen*" was a music that smote each heart beyond the power of speech, beyond all human interpretation, but such as eyes shining through tears may give.

For a few days, Tasmer Castle held a pleasant company, that gradually drifted away, each soul back to its own joys and sorrows. At the end of a week, Donald and Roberta were quite alone. Their new life, full of noble plans and hopes,

was before them. They were eager to realize all that it asked of them. They were one soul, one heart and one hand in everything. They still kept the dew of their youth; all its illusions and enthusiasms; all its fervor of self-sacrifice; all its passionate wealth and strength of personal affection. Their love had been well tested by suffering and disappointment and delay. It had been crowned with a miraculous gift of riches and happiness. Like the blessed Shunamite woman of old, they had the felicity she counted of greater value than royal favor—they could “dwell among their own people.”

They were sitting together one night, talking softly over all these things. The twilight deepened, but they called not for lights; the glow of the fire was sufficient for their sweetly solemn dreams and hopes of their future. Father Con-tach entered. He blessed both and sat down beside them.

“Hector is dead,” he said. “He sent you

back your father's ring, Sir Donald, and with it his eternal love."

Donald took the ring with a murmured prayer and thoughtfully placed it on his finger.

"He went blessedly," continued the priest—"quite happy in the thought that he would sleep with his fathers under the shadow of Torquil church. In the last hour, he dictated to me the verse for his stone. I have promised it shall be placed above him."

"He is worthy to be remembered. What said he?"

"Hector is going to the assembly in heaven :

It was in Easter-Torquil he was reared ;

In blessea Torquil of many crosses he first read his psalms.

*He jougt a gooa fight, ana he goes to his Goa ana his
kindrea ;*

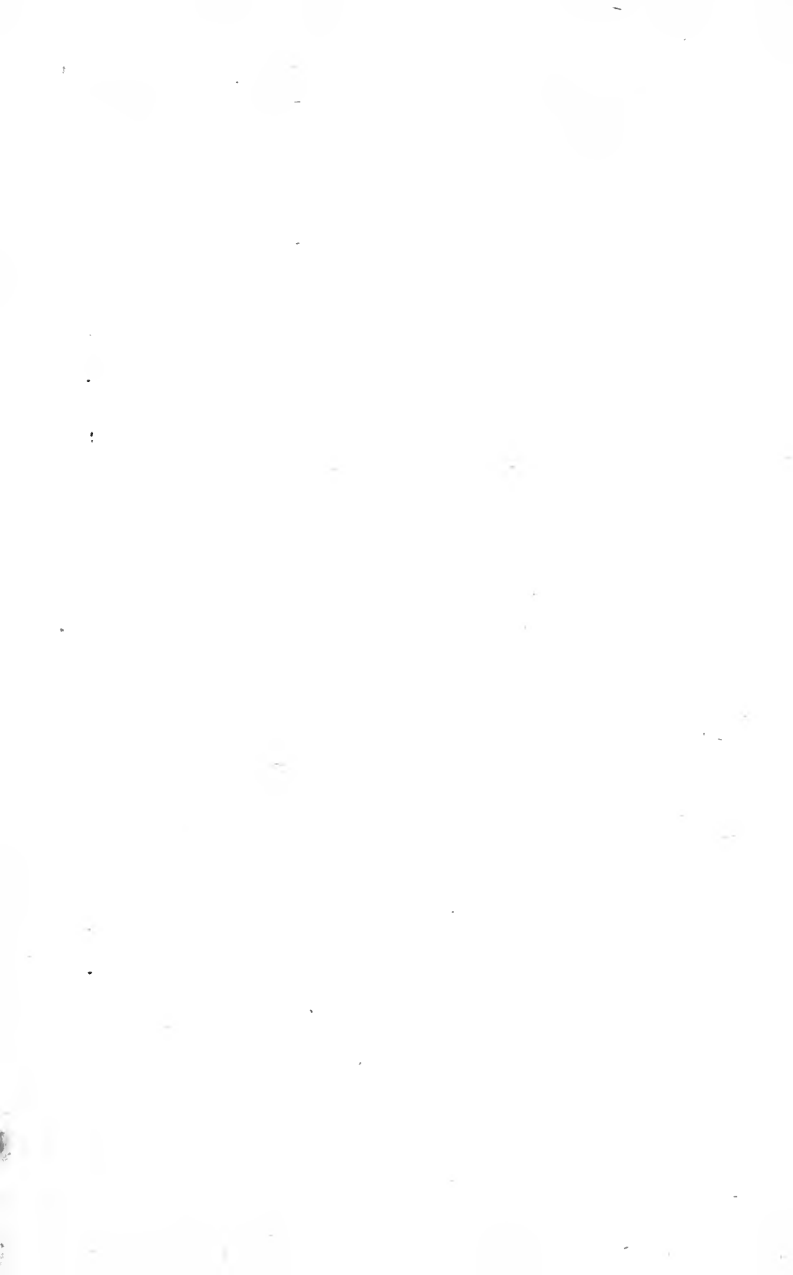
By grace of God and the Torquil, in Torquil he is buried."

A silence full of feeling followed. Through the purple curtains the large crucifix shone white and peaceful in its solemn place, and after a little conversation, the father retired there. The

young husband and his wife glanced at each other. They knew the holy man was praying, and they sat in communion with him. When he returned to their company, he had the Beads of Tasmer in his hand—the large ivory beads that had held their happy fortune.

“Children,” he said, “these beads were not only for *your* prosperity. Through God’s blessing in your hearts, they have brought and they shall bring comfort and salvation to hundreds and thousands who will bear your name. Think not that their material wealth was their great treasure, for none shall ever lift them, with a sincere faith in God and in Christ Jesu. and not find in such prayer aid and blessing from the Beads of Tasmer.”

THE END.



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